Mark Timpson – University College

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity Term, 2017

An International History of Unemployment Through the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization, 1931-1937

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Short abstract of thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Late in 1931, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that worldwide unemployment had reached 20-25 million. The ILO was also mindful that the consequences of unemployment were borne by dependents and concluded that the number of people directly affected by unemployment was therefore probably in the region of 50-60 million. The thesis revisits this old theme of the 'Hungry Thirties' but considers it in a new and different way. Most histories of unemployment during the Great Depression have been presented in national terms but this study examines unemployment from an international perspective by utilizing the League of Nations and ILO as sites through which to explore how debates about unemployment and how to respond to it were being internationalized. Utilizing the vast archives of the League of Nations and ILO, the thesis focuses on a series of interconnected themes – public works and economic policy, migration, housing, and nutrition – themes that the League and ILO identified as being the 'fallout' from unemployment. It builds on recent research of the League and ILO that has revealed more complex histories of these two international organizations and that has recognized that the 'technical' agencies were core functions that consumed significant resources of personnel and money. Crucially, this work not only continued during the 1930s but thrived even as the political atmosphere darkened; it is, therefore, a history that offers another side to the autarky and nationalism of the 1930s. The thesis also connects the technical agencies of the League of Nations to the ILO and, in contrast to the customary treatment of the interaction of these two organizations that emphasizes inter-agency tension, it identifies how the collaboration was an important step in the rediscovery of the fundamental connection between economy and society by linking economic policy to social and physical welfare.

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Long abstract of thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity Term, 2017

At the end of 1931, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that worldwide unemployment had reached 20-25 million. The ILO was also mindful that the effects of unemployment extended beyond the unemployed men and women themselves to include their dependents and concluded that the number of people directly affected by unemployment was therefore probably in the region of 50-60 million. The thesis revisits this old theme of the 'Hungry Thirties' but considers it in a new and different way. Unemployment during the Great Depression has largely been examined in national terms but this study considers it from an international perspective by utilizing the League of Nations and ILO as sites through which to explore how debates about unemployment, and how to respond to it, were being internationalized.

The thesis is influenced by recent historiographical trends in global, international, and transnational history which have sought historical horizons beyond the nation-state. Until recently, historians' interest in the League of Nations had been intermittent and had concentrated largely on its political activities as an actor in the field of international relations. Thus, the League remained more of interest to political scientists concerned with its role and effectiveness as an international organization. This was largely true, too, of the ILO although publications by the ILO or by its former officials appeared more regularly often to coincide with ILO anniversaries. However, both the League and ILO have recently emerged to become centres of considerable historical interest. New research has begun to critically investigate and rehabilitate both organizations revealing far more complex histories and, in the League's case, a greater appreciation of its activities beyond its role as a political actor. It has now been acknowledged that, rather than being an adjunct to the League's political responsibilities, the 'technical' agencies were core functions that consumed significant resources of personnel and money.

Utilizing the vast archives and extensive publications of the League and ILO, the thesis focuses on a series of interconnected themes – public works and economic policy, migration, housing, and nutrition – themes that the League and ILO identified as being the 'fallout' from unemployment. Many different people were involved in the ensuing investigations: economists, health professionals, engineers, politicians, government officials, trade unionists, and international civil servants, although the path to the dynamic and innovative approaches was not straightforward. To be sure, the ILO's response to the Great Depression was immediate, concerned as it was with workers' interests and because it recognized that the economic slowdown was no ordinary trade depression. As unemployment rose rapidly in 1930 with no indication of a seasonal improvement, the ILO, describing the unfolding situation as 'appalling', began to identify policy responses. Acting true to the direction set by its first Director, the Frenchman Albert Thomas, to aim always for 'practical action', it announced a two-pronged approach in January 1931 to create employment: large-scale public works schemes and labour migration. Alongside the emphasis on practical output, the ILO also continually sought intellectual justification for its recommendations assessing others' economic ideas and policy initiatives often through articles published in the

International Labour Review, the ILO's journal. It also conducted and published its own research which, by 1932, called for governments to fund public works schemes through fiscal deficits to overcome cyclical unemployment, to boost aggregate demand, and to provide for long-term social and industrial development.

In contrast to the ILO, in the early 1930s the League's Economic and Financial Organization (EFO) remained an adherent of classical economic liberalism, economic orthodoxy, and was resistant even to the idea of a study into the causes of the economic crisis (although the Assembly of September 1930 instructed the EFO to do exactly that). The EFO opposed public works schemes and resisted any attempts, for example, for public works to be discussed at the World Economic Conference in 1933. The contrasting approaches of the two organizations in the early years of the crisis, 1930-3, created considerable inter-agency tension. By late 1934, however, the EFO began to embark on a new intellectual journey. The realization that nation-states were not listening to its pronouncements on protectionism and international cooperation, combined with the broader effects of the Depression, in particular the massive and enduring unemployment and its political repercussions, compelled the EFO to question its support for monetary and fiscal orthodoxy. It started to advocate a more mixed approach to economic policy and the role of the state, especially when it came to mitigating unemployment. It opened an enquiry into business cycles, the core aim being to prevent depressions or at least to alleviate their impact, as well as being involved in other League investigations related to the effects of unemployment, including nutrition and housing. By the late 1930s, the EFO believed that governments should utilize counter-cyclical measures through fiscal policy, including the advanced planning of public works, to help to counter booms and depressions.

The second strand of the ILO's response to unemployment was migration (the League on the other hand showed no interest in the subject). Here, the ILO faced a multitude of obstacles. The First World War had shattered the more open, global environment that had existed during the nineteenth century as governments imposed drastic limitations on human mobility, a practice that was often reinforced with legislation and quotas after hostilities ended. The new regulations built on perspectives of population that had been infused with race, biology, and control which had manifested during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The ILO's proposals were twofold: internal migration that focused on the development of employment exchanges or the introduction of a system of exchanges if no network already existed; and international migration along similar lines with the ILO acting as an intermediary between nation-states. But even amongst those countries that had started to readmit immigrants during the 1920s, the Depression caused an immediate reversion to highly restrictive practices. That the ILO did not pursue migration any further at the time was an acknowledgement that promoting migration was simply a non-starter in the environment of the early 1930s.

Nonetheless, the ILO continued to believe that it was a worker's right to have freedom of movement; instead it switched its focus to agricultural labour and the rural economy and waited for the right moment to reignite the debate. Primarily aimed at helping tenant farmers and landless former peasants, the objective was to promote land settlement and agricultural development in 'immigration' countries. Notwithstanding the overtures of old-style imperialism, the ILO's Governing Body began to receive positive feedback from Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay in the mid-1930s. A Migration Conference was even held in early 1938 that brought together eighteen countries, although by then the question of migration was coloured as much by calls for 'living space' and the flood of migrants from Spain and Germany as it was for the economic development of 'unexploited lands'.

It was not only in terms of work creation where the League's technical agencies and the ILO advocated new approaches. In September 1932, the League of Nations Health Organization (LNHO) published a report in its own *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization* entitled "The Economic Depression and Public Health". It was a narrow study that concentrated largely on conditions in Germany but it was to herald a new approach by the League. The report was remarkably forthright noting that there was plenty of cause for concern to suggest that the Depression was having a detrimental effect on public health; as such, it was a trenchant criticism of national domestic social policy. Even more importantly, it was the first time that the LNHO had outlined the potentially negative health effects of poverty caused by economic depression and, moreover, it was the first time that the LNHO had suggested publicly that it had a remit in the field of public health or social medicine. The report galvanized the LNHO, EFO, and ILO into action triggering a series of studies on the economic and social conditions of health, most notably, as mentioned above, on housing and nutrition.

In the housing sphere, the LNHO chiefly sought ways to find solutions to the problems of providing cheap residential housing for the working classes. The LNHO approached national experts for information on best practices as well as requesting documentary material of a specifically 'scientific and technical character' as it affected housing. The breadth of the information it sought was extraordinary: the temperature, purity, humidity, and movement of air including the effects on air of heating, cooling, and ventilation; natural and artificial lighting; sanitary requirements; water supply; sewage disposal and treatment; refuse collection; smoke, air, and noise pollution; future housing needs; public works aspects; national, regional, municipal, and private approaches; architecture; financing; town planning, including open spaces, leisure, games and sports; legislation; building regulations; demographics; and rents. The LNHO encouraged countries to form national housing committees to coordinate housing policy; by the late 1930s, thirty had been established and the LNHO also created a Housing Commission to centralize the collection and study of the wealth of information at its disposal.

In a crucial development for the multi-agency approach across a broadening social agenda and as an example of how health was being redefined, the LNHO invited the ILO to study the social consequences of the Depression. It was the first time that the LNHO had specifically directed the ILO to investigate living rather than working conditions. Whilst the ILO highlighted some positive developments in the post-First World War period, it nonetheless criticized all governments for their continued failings, particularly with regards to the quantity of houses constructed and slum clearance, issues that had been exacerbated by the Depression. As well as redefining health, the housing agenda also allowed the opportunity to link the social with the economic. In 1935, the LNHO asked the EFO to consider the economic and financial questions affecting housing. Its conclusion: the major problem affecting working-class housing was the lack of affordability. The EFO also determined that the extreme volatility of building booms alternating with almost complete stagnation was economic waste, and it suggested that housing could therefore be a 'good' form of public works that could counterbalance trade cycle activity.

The second key area of social policy that was highlighted by the LNHO was nutrition. Unconnected to the Depression, the LNHO had already employed a full-time nutritionist, Wallace Ackroyd, whose pioneering research on food deficiencies had brought him to the attention of the LNHO's Director, Ludwik Rajchman. One strand of the LNHO's own groundbreaking work on nutrition was Aykroyd's management of LNHO-led research into a food deficiency disease, pellagra, in Romania in 1933-4. The LNHO was also encouraged

by renowned nutritional experts to step in and to act in a supervisory role to help achieve standardization in this emerging science. But it was the fallout from the massive unemployment and its link to public health, which the LNHO helped to establish, that propelled nutrition to the forefront of the LNHO's agenda. "The Economic Depression and Public Health" claimed that despite outside intervention from families, friends, charities, and state measures such as unemployment relief, millions of people were probably malnourished due to huge falls in their income, which was a direct result of long-term unemployment. Various investigations were undertaken but the subject really gained traction through the League when Stanley Bruce, the former Prime Minister of Australia, convinced delegates during a debate on nutrition at the Assembly in September 1935 of the need for the 'marriage of health and agriculture'.

Bruce's intervention helped to bring about a wide-ranging investigation into numerous aspects of nutrition. His intercession was no coincidence, however, for a nutritional network which included Rajchman, Alexander Loveday (the EFO's Director), Harold Butler (Thomas's replacement as Director of the ILO after Thomas's death in 1932), and British officials including the Labour peer Earl De La Warr, had collaborated in the months leading up to the 1935 Assembly to strategize and to gain support for the nutrition campaign. The Assembly instructed the LNHO to extend its scientific investigations into the relationship between nutrition and public health and at the same time to establish a Mixed Committee on Nutrition to examine the broader aspects of nutrition. The Mixed Committee investigated a diverse range of issues including: health, trends in food habits, agriculture, food prices and consumption, factors influencing food prices, income, and education. The Committee offered a surprisingly blunt assessment of the state of nutrition: even amongst the world's more developed nations, it believed that a public health problem due to poor nutrition existed and that the main source of that problem was poverty. Moreover, its aim was 'to secure optimum development' and not merely to achieve a minimum standard of nutrition. One of the main ways in which it hoped to achieve this goal was to encourage agriculture to diversify production from cereals to livestock, poultry, and fruit and vegetables. There was an economic argument to this, too, as these so-called 'protective' foods were seen as the driver for economic development of agricultural regions that were heavily dependent on cereal production.

The thesis propounds three main historiographical arguments. Firstly, the familiar story of the 1930s is that the connected world of trade, money, and people – the first wave of globalization that had begun in the mid to late nineteenth century – was brought to a shattering close by the Great Depression. The disconnected world which resulted in autarky and nationalism was undeniably one side of the 1930s, but the thesis demonstrates that there was also another side to the 1930s; efforts at cooperative internationalism continued even as the world was on a path to war. Connected to a wide nexus of expertise, the League and ILO undertook a myriad of individual and collaborative studies that sought to deliver holistic approaches to unemployment, in this way offering an alternative worldview to Nazi or Soviet hegemony.

Secondly, the interwar efforts of international intervention offer clear signs of proto-development. There were certainly significant failures but efforts were made by a group of internationalists towards improving the lives of others through economic and social development. Thirdly, the thesis connects the technical agencies of the League of Nations to the ILO. The technical work of the two organizations has largely been treated separately and where it has intersected inter-agency tension has been emphasized. Lastly, this study shows how the collaboration between the League and ILO was an important moment in the

rediscovery of the fundamental connection between economy and society by linking economic policy to social and physical welfare. Having become convinced of the dire health, social, economic, and political consequences of widespread and prolonged unemployment, the two organizations continued to focus on unemployment throughout the 1930s investigating how to prevent future depressions and how to deal with the associated poverty of poor nutrition and poor housing. Thus, it could be said that the Great Depression acted as a catalyst and forced a re-evaluation of the meaning of the terms social, economic, health, and hygiene and how the shifting meanings of social became integrated with the shifting meanings of economic. What was clear, though, was the emergence of the primacy of economics in finding solutions to this and any future crisis.

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Abbreviations

ACN	(British) Advisory Committee on Nutrition
BIS	Bank for International Settlements
CNCE	(British) Committee on Nutrition in the Colonial Empire
CTO	Communication and Transit Organization
EFO	Economic and Financial Organization
EIS	Economic Intelligence Service
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
IIA	International Institute of Agriculture
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILR	*International Labour Review*
ILOA	Archive of the International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LONA	Archive of the League of Nations
LNHO	League of Nations Health Organization
QBHO	*Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization*
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

At the end of 1931, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that worldwide unemployment was 20-25 million. To be sure, the true figure was much higher as the collection of unemployment statistics was not universally practised at the time and the data was notoriously unreliable even amongst those countries that did. Moreover, there was much underemployment and the partially employed did not even register on the unemployment figures. The ILO was also mindful that the effects of unemployment extended beyond the unemployed men and women themselves to include their dependents and that the number of people directly affected by unemployment was therefore probably in the region of 50-60 million.[1] The thesis revisits this old theme, the 'Hungry Thirties',[2] but considers it in a new and different way. Most histories of unemployment during the 1930s have been presented in national terms, sometimes in comparative terms, and yet the Great Depression was a global depression. This study breaks free from national constraints and examines unemployment from an international perspective by utilizing the ILO and the League of Nations as sites through which to explore how debates about unemployment, and how to respond to it, were being internationalized.

The thesis is therefore influenced by recent historiographical trends in global, international, and transnational history – in significant part reacting to the increasingly globalized world of the post-Cold War era – which have sought historical horizons beyond the nation-state. One such vista is international organizations. Whilst international

[1] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'The Economic Depression and Public Health', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization*, Geneva, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Sep. 1932), pp. 425-76, p. 425. The *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization* was, as the name suggests, a journal published by the League of Nations Health Organization with the first edition being published in March 1932.

[2] A. Fenner Brockway, *Hungry England* (London, 1932) and H. Pollitt, 'Introduction', in A. Hutt, *The Condition of the Working Class in Britain* (London, 1933), pp. ix-xvii, although both addressed the issues in more general terms.

organizations were not a new phenomenon at the time of the League of Nations' creation – their numbers had swelled to over four hundred in the period 1870-1914 – these early incarnations were very different creatures to the League and ILO since they were largely private affairs or carried out purely 'technical' functions.[3] Until recently, historians' interest in the League had been sporadic and concentrated on its political activities as an actor in the field of international relations. It was also tainted by the legacy of the League's inability to prevent the Second World War.[4] As a result, the League remained more of interest to political scientists concerned with its role and effectiveness as an international organization. This was largely true, too, of the ILO although publications by the ILO, or works commissioned by it, and by its former officials appeared more frequently often to coincide with the ILO's anniversaries in a process of self-legitimization and/or reflection of service to the organization.[5]

More recently, however, both the League and ILO have emerged to become centres of considerable historical interest. New research has begun to critically investigate and rehabilitate the organizations revealing far more complex histories and, in the League's case, a greater appreciation of its activities beyond its role as a political actor.[6] Rather than being

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[3] A.L.S. Staples, *The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organisation and World Health Organisation Changed the World, 1945-65* (Kent, OH, 2006), p. 4.

[4] See for example: F.P. Walters, *A History of the League of Nations* (Oxford, 1952); J. Barros, *The Corfu Incident: Mussolini and the League of Nations* (Princeton, 1965); J. Barros, *Betrayal from Within: Joseph Avenol, Secretary-General of the League of Nations* (New Haven and London, 1969); J. Barros, *The League of Nations and the Great Powers: the Greek-Bulgarian Incident, 1925* (Oxford, 1970); J. Barros, *Office Without Power: Secretary-General Sir Eric Drummond, 1919-1933* (Oxford, 1979); R. Henig, *The League of Nations* (London, 2010); F.S. Northedge, *The League of Nations: Its Life and Times 1920-46* (Leicester, 1986).

[5] Literature produced by the ILO and its former officials include, for example: International Labour Office, *The International Labour Organization: The First Decade* (London, 1931); H. Butler, *The Lost Peace: A Personal Impression* (London, 1941); G.A. Johnston, *The International Labour Organization: Its Work for Social and Economic Progress* (London, 1970); A. Alcock, *History of the International Labour Organization* (London, 1971). An essay by J. van Daele, 'Writing ILO Histories: A State of the Art', in J. van Daele, M. Rodríguez García, G. van Goethem, and M. van der Linden (eds.), *ILO Histories: Essays on the International Labour Organization and Its Impact on the World During the Twentieth Century* (Bern, 2010), pp. 13-39 reviews the existing literature of the ILO.

[6] S. Pedersen, 'Back to the League of Nations', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 112, No. 4 (Oct. 2007), pp. 1091-1117. Amy Staples, *The Birth of Development* also charts elements of the technical agencies of the League of Nations in the World Bank, the FAO, and WHO.

an adjunct to the League's political responsibilities, it is now acknowledged that the 'technical' agencies were core functions that consumed significant resources of personnel and money; the League, for instance, received generous support from American philanthropists, most notably the Rockefeller Foundation. Moreover, they thrived throughout the 1930s even as the Great Depression placed further pressures on the League's finances and the political atmosphere darkened.[7] Publications on the League's technical branches include those on the League of Nations Health Organization (LNHO) by Iris Borowy and its Economic and Financial Organization (EFO) by Patricia Clavin as well as numerous titles on the activities of the ILO.[8] Borowy and Clavin's monographs are the first systematic investigations of the archives of the League's health and economic functions respectively. Whilst both are institutional histories the focus is not on organizational structures but on people and issues, and both highlight the importance of transnational connections to the ability of the EFO and LNHO to be proto-overseers of the global economy, public health, and social welfare. In the context of the First and Second International and the growth of other left-wing movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the existence of transnational networks of socialists, labour activists, and social reformers is less surprising, of course. However, the true extent and importance

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[7] An early example was a symposium arranged jointly by the United Nations Library and The Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva held in November 1980 and published as *The League of Nations in Retrospect* (Berlin and New York, 1983). But it was not until the mid-1990s that an accelerated interest took hold. See, for example: N. de Marchi, 'League of Nations Economists and the Ideal of Peaceful Change in the Decade of the Thirties', in C.D. Goodwin (ed.), *Economics and National Security: A History of their Interaction* (Durham, N.C., 1991), pp. 143-78; L. Pauly, 'The League of Nations and the Foreshadowing of the International Monetary Fund', *Princeton Essays in International Finance*, 201 (Dec. 1996), pp. 1-52; P. Weindling, (ed.), *International Health Organizations and Health Movements, 1918-1939* (Cambridge, 1995); A. Endres and G. Fleming, *International Organizations and the Analysis of Economic Policy, 1919-1950* (Cambridge, 2002). These examples, however, relied chiefly or entirely on the League and ILO's published reports rather than the archives of the organizations.

[8] I. Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health: The League of Nations Health Organization 1921-1946* (Frankfurt, 2009); P. Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations 1920-1946* (Oxford, 2013); J. van Daele *et al*, *ILO Histories*; S. Hughes and N. Haworth, *The International Labour Organization: Coming in from the Cold* (Abingdon and New York, 2011); D. Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization: The International Labour Organization, 1940-70* (New York, 2012); S. Kott and J. Droux, *Globalizing Social Rights; The International Labour Organization and Beyond* (Basingstoke, 2013).

of these connections to the ILO, especially the flow of personnel into its secretariat and their involvement with its activities, has only recently been unveiled by the latest research of the ILO's archives.

The thesis follows these precedents in terms of sources, form, and historiography. It utilizes the vast archives of the League of Nations and International Labour Organization, housed in libraries in Geneva, in addition to the extensive printed works of both organizations. It also draws on the considerable archive of Alexander Loveday based at Nuffield College, Oxford which he gifted to the College following a period as Warden after the Second World War. Loveday rose to become a senior figure in the EFO having joined the fledgling organization in 1920 and remained with it until the League of Nations ceased activity in 1946.

Moreover, it is a global, 'new' international, and transnational history of responses to unemployment in the 1930s that focuses on a series of interconnected themes – public works and economic policy, migration, housing, and nutrition – themes that the League and ILO identified as being the 'fallout' from unemployment. These form the thematic chapters of the thesis, preceded by a chapter that introduces the actors and institutions. The thesis is international in that the League and ILO were unquestionably concerned with the international situation as they believed that they had uncovered universal issues although they would probably admit that they were less successful in finding universal solutions. It is also international in the sense that the League and ILO were intergovernmental organizations. However, the importance of these links has come to be shown, by Clavin and Borowy for instance, not so much in the traditional manner of diplomatic relations but because the connections to government ministers and high-ranking civil servants provided the League and ILO's officials – the permanent secretariat – with access to the highest offices of state. The thesis also tests the global claims of the League and ILO. As the world's

first intergovernmental organizations the thesis examines which parts of the world they were interested in, or drew on, and why. Moreover, it engages with global methodologies such as its preoccupation with the transnational connections between those who worked for and with the organizations. The League and ILO were linked to a wide nexus of expertise: economists, health professionals, engineers, politicians, government officials and advisors, businessmen, and trade unionists and both the League and ILO used these experts extensively as advisors, to sit on their expert committees, and to carry out investigations. It is appropriate to use an international and transnational methodology, as Erez Manela demonstrated, as it 'is not merely an analytical device...rather it reflects the perceptions and actions of historical actors at the time'.[9]

More specifically, the thesis sits between, or more appropriately across, two strands of the most recent scholarship on the history of international organizations. Current trends on the historiography of the ILO focus on the transplanting of 'model' systems from one country or municipality to another via the international, in a process known as the 'internationalization of the national'. In this manner, Germany is presented as the classic case that acted as the prototype for much of the social insurance legislation introduced in the interwar period, at least up to 1933.[10] This seems an apposite methodology when considering the League and ILO's desire for the constituents of an optimum diet and standards on housebuilding. Whilst no conclusive national nutritional guidelines or housing standards had been established at the time the League and ILO took up these agendas, the debates on standardization had been taking place at the local, municipal, and transnational level

[9] E. Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York, 2007), p. 222.
[10] See, for example: M. Lengwiler, 'The ILO and Other International Actors in Twentieth Century Accident Insurance in Switzerland and Germany', pp. 32-48; S. Kott, 'Constructing a European Social Model: The Fight for Social Insurance in the Interwar Period', pp. 173-95; J. van Daele, 'Industrial states and transnational exchange of social policies: Belgium and the ILO in the Interwar Period', pp. 190-209 all in van Daele *et al* (eds.), *ILO Histories* (2011).

amongst social reformers, engineers, medical scientists, and philanthropists. Many of the experts, and the ideas that these experts generated, were picked up by the League and ILO and used as the basis upon which to proceed with standardization in certain fields.

The concept of the 'internationalization of the national' is much more problematic in the economic sphere, however. In one aspect of economic policy it is true that vocal advocates emerged, especially from within the ILO, for a 'model' approach to tackle unemployment through abolishing the balanced budget and utilizing government borrowing to finance public works. This was a policy seen, for example, from 1932 in Sweden, in the USA through the New Deal, and one that was promoted by Keynesian economics. But economic historians have rarely felt constrained by national boundaries for commercial transactions, as well as economic and financial policies, have always been transnational, international, or global in scope; even the closed economies of the USSR or Nazi Germany had to trade externally to satisfy their demand for raw materials and their production and consumption habits. Clavin offers a different, convincing perspective that, for the League at least, there was no one-size-fits-all approach. Rather, the League was an arena for international cooperation and coordination, albeit one in which a multitude of 'visions' of internationalism were projected onto and by the League.[11]

The thesis aims to make four main historiographical contributions. Firstly, the familiar story of the 1930s is that the connected world of trade, money, and people – the first wave of globalization that had begun in the mid to late nineteenth century – was brought to a shattering close by the Great Depression, epitomized by Harold James' *The End of Globalization* and Robert Boyce's *The Great Interwar Crisis*.[12] The disconnected world which resulted in autarky and nationalism were the default response and undeniably one side

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[11] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 5-7.
[12] H. James, *The End of Globalization: Lessons from the Great Depression* (Cambridge, MA, 2001); R. Boyce, *The Great Interwar Crisis and the Collapse of Globalization* (Basingstoke, 2009).

of the 1930s, but the thesis seeks to demonstrate that there was also another side to the 1930s, a ray of light during the 'dark' decade.[13] That is, the devastating unemployment also spurred international efforts. It is true that the ILO and LNHO studied social problems in the 1920s but their focus was elsewhere; the ILO concentrated on working conditions and the LNHO on drugs and epidemiology. Political and economic developments in the 1930s compelled an introspective reassessment of the role of the technical organizations and, rather than falling into 'morbid disillusionment',[14] they responded with a renewed sense of purpose. Moving far beyond their original functions as centres of research intelligence they assumed an enhanced role and extended their field of activities to the broader socio-economic arena as it affected the individual. They undertook a myriad of individual and collaborative studies that sought to deliver holistic approaches to unemployment and associated poverty, in this way offering an alternative worldview to Nazi or Soviet hegemony. Admittedly, much of their work was of its time; they professed to recognize differences in culture and customs but ethnicity, religion, and gender were ignored. Nevertheless, efforts at cooperative internationalism continued even as the world was on a path to war.

A second historiographical strand is that the interwar efforts of international intervention offer clear signs of what was later to be called development. There were, without question, significant failures and oversight – not least that the non-white world was entirely overlooked – but efforts were made by a group of internationalists towards improving the lives of others through economic and social development. Thirdly, it is a history that connects the League of Nations' technical agencies to the ILO. The technical work of the League and the ILO has largely been treated separately and where it has

[13] For example, M. Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York, 2000) and Z. Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark, European International History, 1933-1939* (Oxford, 2011). I thank Tom Buchanan for the 'ray of light' suggestion during a paper presented to the Modern European seminar, University of Oxford, Oct. 2011.

[14] This was a quote concerning the activities of the League of Nations, but it was a sense that coloured the League and ILO together for decades. Hughes and Haworth, *International Labour Organization*, p. 8.

intersected, inter-agency tension has been emphasized. This study, on the other hand, will draw attention to the collaboration as well as the disconnections between the organizations. Lastly, the thesis will look to show how the collaboration between the League and ILO was an important moment in the rediscovery of the fundamental connection between economy and society by linking economic policy to social and physical welfare. Certainly, the ILO always believed that the division was a false one. In its view, the social conditions of labour, such as living standards being determined by low wages, could not be separated from overriding macroeconomic conditions and concerns. But it was also true that even in the early years of the Great Depression, from 1930 to 1932, many at the League of Nations – especially in the LNHO – were also convinced of the dire health, social, economic, and political consequences of widespread and prolonged unemployment. It was because unemployment remained so stubbornly high during the 1930s – only falling significantly when rearmament kicked in – that the League and ILO continued to focus on unemployment, and began to investigate how to prevent future depressions and how to deal with the associated poverty of poor nutrition and poor housing. Thus, it could be said that the Great Depression acted as a catalyst and forced a re-evaluation of the meanings of the terms social, economic, health, and hygiene and how the shifting meanings of social became integrated with the shifting meanings of economic. What was clear, though, was the emergence of the primacy of economics in finding solutions to this, and any future, crisis.

Chapter One: Actors and Institutions

This chapter provides background and context to the institutions and some of the key actors. In doing so it seeks to demonstrate how the ILO, EFO, and LNHO operated and to explain how both the design of these pioneering institutions and the role played by the central actors were so critical to their effective functioning. Furthermore, it introduces some of the work undertaken in the 1920s, which was not only crucial for establishing the institutions' credibility within the international community, but it also laid the foundation for many of the investigations carried out during the 1930s. First, though, the chapter begins with a brief overview of the contemporary understanding of unemployment.

To be sure, unemployment was still very much a new phenomenon that had only entered public discourse in the two decades or so before the First World War.[1] As the twentieth century approached, employment for large swathes of the working classes, even in the more industrialized parts of the world, had remained largely casual and unstable. The efforts of late-nineteenth century social reformers like Charles Booth and academics such as Raoul Jay had, though, begun to highlight and to categorize poverty and underemployment, and brought attention to the instability of employment at that time. Only then did involuntary unemployment come to be acknowledged and the unemployed to be disassociated from the indolent.[2] Unemployment insurance was first introduced in Germany in the 1880s and the world's first government-funded scheme came into existence in Britain in 1911. Although these were critical developments on the long road towards recognizing that employment was not always controllable, unemployment during the pre-war period was, nonetheless, still conceived as a social problem. The recognition that unemployment

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[1] R. Skidelsky, *Keynes: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2010), p. 14.

[2] I. Lespinet-Moret and I. Liebeskind-Sauthier, 'Albert Thomas, le BIT et le chômage: expertise, catégorisation et action politique internationale', *Les cahiers IRICE*, 2 (2008), pp. 157-79, pp. 157-8.

was an economic problem – and more importantly what to do about it – was to emerge during the interwar years.

For some policy innovators, such as Keynes, public works offered a gateway from the mass unemployment and economic stagnation of the Great Depression to jobs and recovery; for others, a public works programme was wasteful government expenditure or an activity deemed beyond a government's remit. The historical relationship between public works and unemployment was, however, not always so clear cut. Works organized by local or municipal authorities had long been used as a means of creating, as the ILO described it, 'artificial demand for labour' when it was believed that social conditions had deteriorated to the point of destitution;[3] even proponents of laissez faire endured relief works under forms of poor law provision or during moments of humanitarian crisis. By definition, these were improvised, emergency works that created temporary work designed for the impoverished rather than for the unemployed because wage levels were far below market rates. However, social reformers and other progressives believed that there were more desirable and advantageous methods of utilizing the resources of central and local government. A public discourse emerged along these lines just prior to the First World War in several countries, and included individuals such as the British economist and statistician Arthur Bowley who, along with Sidney and Beatrice Webb, argued to the Poor Law Commission in 1909 that planned public works should be saved for periods of trade depression. Similar proposals for public works were expounded in Sweden, and also in Germany by an amateur economist Nicholas Johannsen who was later cited by Keynes in his *Treatise on Money*.[4]

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[3] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Unemployment and Public Works*, Studies and Reports, Series C (Employment and Unemployment), No 15 (Geneva, 1931), p. 5.
[4] Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations*, p. 82; W. R. Garside, *British Unemployment, 1919-1939: A Study in Public Policy* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 299-300; B. Ohlin (1981), 'Stockholm and Cambridge: Four Papers on the Monetary and Employment Theory of the 1930s', edited by O. Steiger, *History of Political Economy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Summer 1981), pp. 189-255 in M. Blaug (ed.), *Bertil Ohlin (1899-1979)* (Aldershot, 1992), p. 114.

The International Labour Organization

The revolution of economic thinking in the 1930s caused public works to be fundamentally redefined from being seen as a way of granting relief to one of creating employment and as an 'investment' in public assets. Only in academic circles is it now becoming acknowledged that the ILO was an important player in these debates.[5] The thesis will seek to build on these findings by demonstrating that the ILO looked to draw on the latest academic and theoretical developments, it engaged in conversations with and approached experts to conduct research, and it even persuaded some of these experts to become employees of the organization. Albert Thomas, the ILO's first Director, and many of his colleagues in the ILO recognized the gravity of the economic collapse far quicker than most and championed the new economic ideas precisely because they were devised, despite their theoretical nature, as a means to create employment. The approach, to have direct and positive consequences for workers, was a key philosophy of Thomas who consistently impressed upon those within and outside the organization that the ILO existed to improve the lives of workers, and as such the ILO's research and efforts were always to aim for 'practical results'.

The ILO's path to the forefront of debates concerning economic policy and public works was by no means straightforward, however. The organization had emerged from the decades-long social and political struggles of the pre-First World War era, although the precise timing was certainly influenced by fears of workers' actions in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution and the impact of the First World War.[6] The political leaders of the main belligerents acknowledged – albeit not necessarily publicly – that the importance of workers was not just through their contribution on the battlefield, but also that they had played a critical role in a total war economy. Governments had felt compelled to draft trade unionists, socialists, and other left-wing figures into

[5] See, for example, Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations*.

[6] See Alcock, *History of the ILO*, pp. 3-46 for a comprehensive account of the origins and establishment of the ILO.

key roles during the war to ensure workers' support for their war efforts. In the aftermath of the war, it became necessary to appease and reward the working classes who had been conscripted, and who had died and had been wounded in their millions. One of the figures involved in that pre-war struggle and who was brought into a government role during the First World War was the Frenchman Albert Thomas.

Thomas was a surprising choice to become the ILO's first Director as he did not even attend the first ILO Conference in Washington in October 1919 where the ILO was formally established. The position had been expected to go to the Briton Harold Butler, who was instead appointed as one of two Deputy Directors (he later became Director after Thomas's death in May 1932). Thomas was very much the workers' choice, despite his absence from Washington, for he was a committed, though non-revolutionary, socialist and a leading disciple of Jean Jaurès who had enjoyed a long history of involvement with the international workers' movement. He had worked for the socialist paper *L'Humanité* and was elected as councillor and mayor of Champigny, before being elected to the French Chamber of Deputies in 1910. After the outbreak of the war, he served briefly in a territorial regiment before being brought in as Under-Secretary of State for Artillery and Munitions in May 1915 to oversee the factory production of munitions. He became a member of the cabinet in December of the same year, and then Minister of Munitions in 1916. Like Thomas, Butler worked within various war departments during the First World War but otherwise his background contrasted sharply with Thomas. Butler was educated at Eton and Oxford and entered the British civil service in 1907;[7] his public school and Oxbridge background – similar to the

[7] R. Lowe, 'Butler, Sir Harold Beresford (1883-1951)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 20 Feb. 2009, at http://ezproxyprd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/32212.

EFO's Loveday – perhaps explains why the relationship between the EFO and the ILO improved in the 1930s after Thomas's death.

Thomas is widely regarded as having been the inspiration that established the ILO's reputation and *esprit de corps*, constantly pressing for workers' rights and the aforementioned practical results. It was not an easy task. Above all, although the ILO was an independent entity, the League set its annual budget. The ILO could not therefore afford to upset the League's political masters by being too radical or overly political. In this regard, it was helped by its unique, tripartite structure of government delegates, employers' organizations, and workers. These groups populated two of the ILO's three organs. First, representatives of each of the three groups attended the annual International Labour Conference (ILC) which voted to decide on the ILO's work for the following year. Second, they sat in equal numbers on the ILO's Governing Body which followed up and debated the actions of the Conference (it usually sat a few times per year). Many of the individuals from these groups were a constant feature throughout the period, including towering trade unionists such as Léon Jouhaux, Secretary-General of the *Confédération générale du travail* from 1909 to 1947, who was a close and trusted friend of Thomas.

But whilst the contribution of trade union leaders like Jouhaux has long been recognized as crucial to establishing the credibility of the ILO amongst trade union members, the role played by the third of the ILO's three organs, the International Labour Office, which was its permanent secretariat, has only recently come to be appreciated. The secretariat's official role, as an international body of civil servants in permanent employment, was to carry out the instructions of the ILO's Conference and Governing Body, such as supporting the work of the ILO's standing committees. But the secretariat went much further than this. The development was less controversial than the actions of the secretariat in the EFO and LNHO which were

intergovernmental organizations (see below) for the ILO was after all a workers' organization. Nonetheless, as the ILO (and so too the League's technical sections) became more established their conviction grew and they pushed the boundaries of their functionality; they were indeed 'self-transforming'.[8] This should, perhaps, not be that surprising as many of the characters involved in pre-war left-wing organizations and reformist movements either collaborated with or supported the ILO's work, or went to work for the ILO's Office. It is worth stressing that neither the League nor the ILO were ever handed a free reign; governments often ignored their counsel and the League and ILO had no power to compel anyone or any authority to act on their findings. The issue of sovereignty was indeed one of the key arguments consistently asserted by many national governments, especially amongst the 'major' powers, who wished to curtail the League and ILO's expansion into what they described as 'national' affairs.

The ILO's methodology centred on the investigation of an issue which had been previously been voted upon by the delegates appointed to the Conference and followed up by the Governing Body. The investigation was undertaken by one of the ILO's standing committees, an ad hoc committee, or an outside expert, which might produce conventions or recommendations on working practices that the ILO then lobbied national governments to enact into law. At other times, the output was simply a discussion paper. The influence of science and the technocrat in this period is conspicuous. The ILO (and the League's) secretariat were full of academics or other experts and the organizations used the expertise abundantly. The 1920s was a veritable golden age for the ILO as it passed numerous conventions that set standards on working conditions for child labour, working hours, the rights of women, and dangerous and toxic substances. Many of these

[8] M.D. Dubin, 'The League of Nations Health Organization', in P. Weindling (ed.), *International Health Organizations and Movements 1918-1939* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 56-80, p. 73.

conventions were adopted by national governments (although many were not). The ILO did not merely echo contemporary research, either. In terms of economic thought and economic policy, for instance, the ILO participated keenly during this period of revolution in ideas where new theories were continuously emerging and the ILO sought to develop these and their own ideas into practical ends.

Nonetheless, regarding unemployment and the creation of jobs, the ILO made a slow start as the focus of its work during the 1920s was chiefly directed towards unemployment insurance.[9] As such, the ILO devoted much time and resources to expanding insurance schemes where they already existed and transplanting national 'models' where they did not. For the ILO, insurance schemes were a vital element of social policy as they protected workers against the worst effects of a loss of income, in this case involuntary unemployment, but they did not, of course, address the underlying problem of a lack of employment opportunities. Calls were made in the early 1920s for public works schemes. The first International Labour Conference of 1919 passed a recommendation that called for all centrally- or municipally-funded public works projects to be reserved for episodes of unemployment and the 1921 and 1922 International Labour Conferences similarly suggested using public works as palliative relief works for unemployment.[10] But these early discussions were no more than vague generalizations and fit into the broader discourse that had emerged amongst social reformers in the pre-war period. The recommendations were ill-defined and there was no suggestion that the public works were 'new capital works'; in this sense, they were in no way proto-Keynesian.[11]

[9] Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations*, p. 83.
[10] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Unemployment and Public Works*, pp. 1-3.
[11] Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations*, pp. 82-3.

The ILO did, however, undertake research during the 1920s into the causes of unemployment. But it had to struggle against the EFO to even be permitted to study any matters that linked the economy and society, as the EFO disputed the ILO's authority to conduct any work in the economic sphere. Arthur Salter, the EFO's first Director, believed that the ILO should concentrate on social issues and that the EFO was the only body that should be allowed to study economics. Many factors seemed to be at work here. Firstly, in what could be described as a classic case of empire-building, according to the realist school of international relations theory,[12] the EFO was looking to establish and to legitimize itself. It was a new organization, only appointed as a permanent section within the League in 1923; until then the Economic and Financial Committees had been afforded only provisional status. Secondly, the EFO viewed the ILO with suspicion. Led by the socialist Thomas, the ILO was more obviously left-wing and populated by numerous individuals who were at the forefront of debates surrounding social reform. It was also more French. The EFO was more conservative, British, and a defender of the open, liberal economies of the pre-war era and was ill-disposed towards what it believed was a radical ILO. And, thirdly, the structural configuration of the EFO was markedly different to the ILO. The EFO had two standing committees (an Economic and a Financial Committee that will be discussed below), which were intergovernmental committees, and as such the government ministers and officials that populated the committees were forthright in their opposition to outside interference in to what they considered were national issues, and who saw most infringements as a challenge to national sovereignty.

[12] See e.g. B. Verbeek, 'International Organizations: The Ugly Duckling of International Relations Theory', in B. Reinalda and B. Verbeek, *Autonomous Policy Making by International Organizations* (London, 1998), pp. 11-26, p. 14.

Unsurprisingly, the ILO vehemently disagreed with the EFO's reluctance to allow it to study economic issues. In seeking to link economic policy to social welfare, the ILO argued that the conventional boundaries between the economic and the social spheres were porous. And, yet, although the specific role granted to the ILO at its creation did not envisage 'pure' economic research, ultimately the League's Council overruled Salter and backed the ILO following the inflation crises of 1922-3. A 'permanent' Sub-Committee on Economic Crises (later renamed the Mixed Committee on Economic Crises) was tasked 'to investigate the main factors of the current crisis from which unemployment resulted' under the auspices of the EFO's Economic Committee, although with ILO representation.[13] The fact that unemployment was on the League's radar was a significant breakthrough for the ILO, but ultimately the Mixed Committee on Economic Crises only met on a handful of occasions between 1923 and 1927 despite Thomas's constant appeals to Salter and Eric Drummond, the League's Secretary-General (1920-33), for more frequent meetings.[14] The ILO also took the opportunity to undertake independent research into the causes of unemployment which it published in two reports across nineteen countries in 1924.[15] It is worth noting that whilst the ILO studied an extensive group, the countries were from what was to become a regular core of Europe, Britain and its Dominions, the USA, and Japan. This was the case of much of the ILO's technical work (and the League's too). It was said at the time that the data for other countries did not exist which was no doubt partly true; however, it was surely also the case that the League and ILO were dominated by the 'major' powers, including the make-up of the secretariat, and as such the League and ILO were largely directed for their own means. Efforts

[13] G. Ottlik, *Annuaire de la Société des Nations, 1920-7* (Geneva, 1927), p. 501.
[14] ILOA, U 6/1/2, Enquiry into Unemployment, Note concerning collaboration with the EFO for an enquiry into unemployment, 1 Mar. 1924.
[15] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Unemployment, 1920-1923*, Studies and Reports, Series C (Unemployment), No. 8 (Geneva, 1924); International Labour Office, *Unemployment in its National and International Aspects*, Studies and Reports, Series C (Unemployment), No. 9 (Geneva, 1924).

were made, particularly in the 1930s, by the ILO to extend its reach into Asia and, Central and South America by opening correspondent offices (local ILO field offices) in, for instance, Argentina, Brazil and India.[16] The League, too, played a significant role in the early 1920s in the financial stabilization of a number of countries of Central and Eastern Europe – Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia – although this meant that it was still, of course, very European.

One of the ILO's main conclusions from the study into economic crises was that periods of inflation and deflation had correlated with booms and depressions in the pre-war era. It believed that the 'maintenance of greater stability of the general level of prices would lead to a greater steadiness of trade and, therefore, to the diminution of unemployment'. This was consistent with the ILO's conclusions from its own unemployment studies in the 1920-3 period that regarded unemployment as a symptom of the impact of monetary effects on trade and the economy. These ideas fell into the perceived wisdom at the time.[17] The ILO professed that it wanted to continue to research monetary stability but it seems that the disbanding of the Mixed Committee on Economic Crises in 1927, due to the EFO's focus on trade and the 1927 World Economic Conference, was the catalyst for the ILO to abandon any further enquiries into economic depressions and unemployment at the time.[18] The ILO's representatives on the Mixed Committee on Economic Crises were, however, able to persuade their colleagues to investigate 'economic barometers' in an attempt 'to forecast the trend of business conditions', a clear marker of the way that the ILO was able to shape the economic debate.[19] It also successfully persuaded the EFO to broaden the

[16] The correspondent offices were designed not only to establish the ILO's presence but also to collate information on social, economic, and political conditions in the respective locations. Monthly reports were sent back to Geneva.
[17] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Unemployment, 1920-1923*, pp. 143-54.
[18] ILOA, U 6/1/2, Mixed Committee on Economic Crises, Note submitted by the ILO concerning the Resolution at the International Labour Conference in 1924, 1925.
[19] Clavin in *Securing the World Economy* does not identify the ILO's influence on the EFO during the 1920s.

scope of its Economic Intelligence Service (EIS)[20] and publish economic indices in the *Statistical Bulletin of the League of Nations* that included statistics on economic conditions from a number of different countries.[21] In this manner the ILO hoped that it would be able to prevent future depressions through forecasting or at least to devise a course of action when the 'barometer' shifted.

In the main, though, the ILO's approach to economics in the 1920s was inherently conservative. Research concentrated on the monetary effects on business cycles with unemployment seen as a corollary of periods of unstable prices.[22] The perspective of studying the causes of unemployment was, of course, very different from devising measures to create employment in periods of depression. Interestingly, though, two pieces of research in the 1920s stood out by pushing against the boundaries of the prevailing monetary orthodoxy. In 1926, Percival Martin, a long-time servant of the ILO's Economic Section, published 'Overproduction and Underconsumption: A Remedy' in the *International Labour Review*.[23] Martin, a Briton who had been taught underconsumption theories by the American economist Wesley Mitchell at Columbia University,[24] attributed the recurring periods of economic depression of industrialized countries to a lack of markets and insufficient 'buying power'. Underconsumption was not a new theory, dating back at least to Sismondi,[25] but Martin was picking up on the thread developed by J.A. Hobson's conception of underconsumption. Hobson had used it to explain, amongst other

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[20] The EIS was part of the EFO and gathered statistics from many countries which were published in numerous titles (see Clavin, p. 36).
[21] ILOA, U 6/1/2, Mixed Committee on Economic Crises, Note submitted by the ILO concerning the Resolution at the International Labour Conference in 1924, 1925.
[22] Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations*, pp. 19-21.
[23] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, P.W. Martin, 'Overproduction and Underconsumption: A Remedy', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (July 1926), pp. 37-54.
[24] Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations*, p. 87.
[25] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, M. Ansiaux, 'Under-Consumption as a Factor in the Economic Cycle', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (July 1932), pp. 8-25, p. 8.

phenomena, imperialism, the trade cycle, and unemployment.[26] Research of the period 1890-1911, Martin wrote, had shown that trade depressions occurred about once in every four years. He suggested that policymakers should use normal monetary methods to increase the money supply and/or credit to stabilize the economic cycle which would in turn increase the purchasing power of the whole community rather than the then current practice whereby monetary methods were used to stabilize a currency or money. That is, monetary policy should be applied to reduce interest rates to boost the economy rather than to maintain interest rates at a level that protected a currency's value against gold. Martin believed that it could be done 'scientifically' to find a balance between inflation and a lack of markets. In this essay Martin was thus attempting to conflate the monetary causes of unemployment and depression with underconsumption theory whilst advocating the use of economic barometers to counter such economic disturbances.[27]

The second piece of research, *Unemployment and Public Works*, was not published until 1931 but its origins lay in a resolution at the ILC of 1926. The resolution asked for an examination of the 'financial obstacles' to public works. This was a telling intervention, the first time that the ILO had speculated about methods of financing public works, which would eventually take it on to the path of policy initiatives that called for new and direct government borrowing to increase aggregate demand and to fund public works programmes.[28] The recommendation from the ILC had been referred to the Mixed Committee on Economic Crises which in turn produced a list of questions concerning the execution and financing of public works. The investigation was conducted in the usual mix of countries – Australia, Austria, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark,

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[26] W. Richmond, 'John A. Hobson: Economic Heretic', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (July 1978), pp. 283-94.
[27] Martin, 'Overproduction and Underconsumption', pp. 38, 39, 47.
[28] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Unemployment and Public Works* in p.1 in Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations*, p. 85.

Finland, France, Germany, Britain, Italy, Japan, Poland, Switzerland, and the US – but with one notable addition: the USSR. But since the Mixed Committee on Economic Crises did not meet again after 1927 the ILO independently continued the studies which it then published in 1931.

Unemployment and Public Works included a lengthy discussion on the theories of the economists Arthur Bowley, Arthur Pigou, Ralph Hawtrey, Gustav Cassel, J.M. Keynes, Henry Clay, and the ILO's Martin on whether public works diverted funds from private investment.[29] The ILO then presented many of the main arguments that were to become central to the future justification of public works being used to fight depression and unemployment and, crucially, how they should be financed. It argued that government intervention at a time of economic contraction would not 'crowd out' private enterprise, but would rather stimulate activity and provide a significant 'psychological' boost to trade; reducing unemployment would bring down government expenditure as benefit payments were curtailed; and an increase in economic activity would have positive multiplier effects on both employment and the purchasing power of a community. Even more interesting was the report's discussion of financing. Governments, it noted, raised money for public works either through taxation or borrowing and whilst it was 'always preferable' to fund works through taxation this was an unfeasible option during a depression because it merely added to the 'burden of taxation'. The alternative was government borrowing. It debated a number of problems including the delays involved in authorizing a loan, securing the money, and permission to carry out the public works, and conducted a lengthy discussion of the various ways in which governments could budget in advance for public works. One suggestion was to set aside a percentage of the budget every year which would fund public works when required during a depression but it would be used to redeem the national debt when the economy was expanding.[30]

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[29] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Unemployment and Public Works*, pp. 24-31.
[30] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Unemployment and Public Works*, pp. 6, 16, 29-30, 90-100.

The ideas discussed in *Unemployment and Public Works* showed the innovative research that was undertaken by the ILO during this period of economic revolution. Nonetheless, the severity of the economic contraction during 1930 compelled the ILO to pursue a much more aggressive approach towards tackling unemployment and to turn the development of economic thought into action.[31] The sudden and massive rise in unemployment caused Thomas and the ILO an immediate dilemma: what was a labour organization if it was unable to do anything about the employment of labour? Charles Schürch, the Secretary of the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions and a member of the ILO's Governing Body, noted as much during the debate on unemployment in the Governing Body in October 1930: 'public opinion was looking to the ILO with the hope that it might do something to alleviate this terrible crisis, if not to provide a complete remedy for it'.[32] The reality was, as Harold Butler recognized when reflecting later on the Depression, that the ILO was forced to adapt to very different circumstances in the early 1930s. It was no longer enough to set standards on regulations and conditions of employment, Butler explained; labour conventions were inadequate because they simply did not help the unemployed.[33] At a time of immense suffering for millions of workers all over the world the ILO had to prove its relevance to workers and its capacity to effect change. Immediately it started to treat unemployment as a subject in its own right rather than as a symptom and part of economic ideas, which in turn led to unemployment policies and direct action to create employment. Thomas was at the heart of this campaign and fought tirelessly to find ways to create employment until his death in May 1932. He constantly pressed the EFO, the League, and national governments for measures to reduce unemployment of

[31] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, p. 75.
[32] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 50th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Brussels, 11 Oct. 1930, p. 683.
[33] Butler, *The Lost Peace*, p. 52.

which public works became their flagship policy. The ILO's efforts to effect this will be discussed below in chapter two.

The League of Nations: The Economic and Financial Organization

The EFO operated under a very different framework to the ILO; its origins were less auspicious too. It was not formally created out of the peace process after the First World War, which actually had little to say on economic and financial matters, since victorious governments had expected a return to 'business-as-usual' in the realms of economic and monetary policy. But persistent tensions over reparations and inter-Allied debts, the immediate post-First World War depression that brought rising unemployment, and concern over potential economic collapse in Central and Eastern Europe led to two international economic conferences: the first in Brussels in 1920 and a second in Genoa in 1922. The preparation for and the role played by an embryonic team of EFO officials at these two conferences convinced government representatives of the virtue of establishing a permanent organization to monitor international economic and financial relations, despite those governments' reticence in sanctioning any kind of oversight to an outside body.[34] The organization's framework reflected the concerns over national sovereignty. Like the other sections (or organizations) of the League – Health, Political, Mandates, Disarmament, and Communication and Transit – the EFO was granted an intergovernmental standing committee. In fact, the EFO had two standing committees: the Economic Committee (for the Economic Section) concerned with economic relations between states, ostensibly trade and commercial policy; and the Financial Committee (for the Financial Section) whose remit included banking, monetary policy, currency regimes, financial reconstruction, and taxation. The Economic Committee usually

[34] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 16-25.

comprised trade ministers whilst the Financial Committee was populated by either finance ministers or senior Treasury officials. The committees met multiple times a year and reported on their work to the League's Council and the Assembly.

But, as the evidence will show, the EFO (like the LNHO) was much more than an intergovernmental institution. Supporting the committees was a secretariat, the League's full-time international civil service. The secretariat's formal function was to serve these intergovernmental committees in an administrative and technical capacity but recent research has shown that the secretariat enjoyed a far more enhanced responsibility and emerged at the forefront of policy development in politically sensitive areas.[35] The League's technical sections were initially intended to act as repositories of information but as more issues came under their purview the secretariat soon began to report on this information. Thus, a line was crossed which took them into evaluation and from there it was a short leap to making recommendations. The last step was to set the agenda. As such, the secretariat sat on the EFO's committees as participants not observers and its officials were able to exert considerable influence over the work and at times even the outcomes of their organizations' work. They proved to be remarkably effective at functioning transnationally and internationally utilizing the status of an international organization but able to operate beneath the constraints imposed by national agendas, to create independent networks of experts, and to disseminate their ideas. As a point of reference, to help distinguish between the secretariat's contribution and the intergovernmental dimension references in the thesis to the EFO (and LNHO) will describe the belief, mood, and outlook of the secretariat and its experts. In this way, the

[35] P. Clavin and Jens-Wilhelm Wessels, 'Transnationalism and the League of Nations: Understanding the Work of its Economic and Financial Organization', *Contemporary European History*, 14, 4 (2005), pp. 465-92; Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 5-6. See also Dubin, 'League of Nations Health Organization', and Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health* who both described similar characteristics in the workings of the LNHO.

international view from Geneva can be differentiated from national interests as conveyed by the ministers or officials representing national governments.

The intergovernmental framework may have been intended states to ensure that they protected their national interests but it nonetheless imbued the technical organizations with considerable prestige, authority, and unique access; the League of Nations was a revolution in that respect. As such, in the 1920s, the EFO, the LNHO and ILO were able to establish themselves as the foci of global intelligence-gathering for economic, financial, health, and social affairs. Throughout the interwar period they endeavoured to improve the quality and quantity of information at their disposal working at the local, national, and international level with non-governmental organizations, statistical institutes, and government departments collecting and defining material, and producing nomenclature. They kept abreast of developments in their fields of study – and expanded into new ones – which enabled them to connect to a wide constituency of academics, economists, statisticians, health professionals, housing experts, architects, engineers, and philanthropic institutions. In this regard, they were hugely successful; their roles as 'repositories' of information were well-established by 1930.

The broadening purview was by no means complete, though, as large gaps in their knowledge remained, not least within the developing world. Partly this was due to colonial neglect as little or no information existed in many colonial territories, but it was also due to attitude. The technical organizations reflected the views of the white European male at the time in that regard. The terminology was instructive: countries outside of the aforementioned core of Britain and its Dominions, Europe, the USA, and Japan were referred to as 'overseas' or 'tropical'. But the 'White Man's World' view was also reflected in the personnel, the investigations, and the ideas. Empires, of course, still ruled large swathes of the world and although some colonies were granted status at

the League, such as India for instance, Britain did not allow any League oversight in India in the same way that China was able to approach the League for help with its public health programme.[36]

Up until the end of 1930, the EFO was under the stewardship of one man, Sir Arthur Salter. After that, due to internal League politicking, the two sections came under separate directors: Pietro Stoppani became head of the Economic Section and Alexander Loveday became head of the Financial Section. Earlier, in 1928, Loveday had been appointed Director of the Economic Intelligence Service, the EFO's statistical branch. It is Loveday who emerges as the most prominent EFO representative in the thesis because after Salter had left it was the Financial Section that was at the forefront of debates on monetary and financial policy. At the time that the Depression broke, the EFO's wider perspective of the policymakers' function was a reluctance to intervene in the economy in any meaningful way; the authorities' responsibility for economic management was limited to providing a general framework for business to prosper which, in 1929, was primarily still the gold standard and an independent central bank.[37] Loveday epitomized this. Educated at Shrewsbury School and Peterhouse, Cambridge, Loveday was in many ways a product of the period, in economic terms at least, as a classical liberalist. He had joined the League's secretariat in 1920 and remained Director of an expanded EFO until it ceased to exist in 1946 (Stoppani's contract was not renewed in 1939). Nonetheless, the EFO's attitude to classical monetary orthodoxy, and specifically the working of the gold standard, had begun to waver, in the late 1920s.

The gold standard was a type of fixed exchange rate mechanism that tied a nation's currency to a fixed value of gold. The paper currency in circulation was backed by the amount of

[36] Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health*, p. 361.
[37] B. Eichengreen and H. James, 'Monetary and Financial Reform in Two Eras of Globalization', in M. Bordo, A.M. Taylor and J. Williamson, *Globalization in Historical Perspective* (Chicago and London, 2003), pp. 515-48, p. 516.

gold in a central bank's reserves (foreign currency was also held by central banks to supplement the gold reserves) and the money supply of a country therefore fluctuated with the amount of gold and foreign currency held at the central bank. In theory, all of a country's paper currency could be converted on demand into gold coin or bullion at the fixed price. It was truly international in character: currencies were freely tradable across borders due to the absence of exchange controls; and it relied on the cooperation of countries on the gold standard, particularly Britain, France, and the USA, to support any currency under pressure. The attraction of the gold standard, especially to financiers and commercial traders in a global economy with the freedom of movement of people, goods, and capital, was because it eliminated uncertainty and, critically, it was outside of government control. By offering a measurable value to a currency which operated 'automatically' it helped to keep prices stable (and therefore contain inflation) and it removed the threat of currency devaluation.[38] The automaticity of the system has long been questioned, notably by Kindleberger[39] and Eichengreen,[40] but most policymakers and economists at the time believed that the gold standard had the necessary qualities to stabilize the global monetary system.

The system operated seemingly untroubled for decades in the nineteenth century. Although the First World War brought it to an abrupt end, the apparent advantages, reinforced by the belief that the gold standard had contained the rampant inflation which raged through parts of Europe in 1922-3, meant that by the late 1920s most governments, pressed by financiers and central bankers, had opted to 'return to gold'. A major underlying assumption about the system was that a country's exchange rate would be supported by the operations of its central bank to maintain positive trade

[38] For a more detailed explanation of the workings of the gold standard see P. Clavin, *The Great Depression in Europe 1929-1939* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 40-6.
[39] C. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929-39* (London, 1973), pp. 291-4.
[40] B. Eichengreen, *Golden Fetters: The Gold Standard and the Great Depression, 1919-1939* (New York and Oxford, 1995), pp. 390-1.

and budget balances. If a negative imbalance occurred, which resulted in gold leaving a nation's reserves, the key policy tool was to increase interest rates to protect the currency, the idea being that the higher interest rate would attract investors to bring gold back to the country suffering the shortfall. Similarly, if gold was attracted to a country because it was running a large positive trade balance, interest rates would be cut with the aim of 'losing' gold. In this manner interest rates were used only as an instrument to maintain currency equilibrium. In fact, at the time there was little understanding of how interest rates affected business decisions and investment.[41]

The gold standard enjoyed wide support amongst central bankers, finance officials, and financiers although many realized that the system was imperfect. By the late 1920s, however, it had become obvious to the Governor of the Bank of England, Montagu Norman, and his colleagues at the central bank and the British Treasury, as well as to the EFO's secretariat, that the gold standard was not operating according to its assumed rules. Britain, amongst others, was 'losing' gold to France and the USA. After rebuttals from the French and American governments to discuss the issue, British officials gently persuaded the League's Council to appoint a 'Gold Delegation' in the summer of 1929 as a sub-committee of the Financial Committee. Clavin and Wessels have revealed that the British contingent, other allies, including the economist Gustav Cassel, and the EFO's secretariat, pressed for a thorough investigation of the maldistribution of gold rather than the delegation's prescribed remit. Criticism of French and American hoarding of gold led to a number of heated clashes. Official British backing was never explicit, though, and as the economic and political climate changed so markedly during the committee's term (1929 to 1932) British officials had no desire, especially after September 1931 once Britain had decided to leave the gold standard, to be accused of condemning the Americans or the French for exercising a monetary

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[41] Clavin, *Great Depression*, pp. 40-6.

squeeze on the world that had caused the Great Depression. Tellingly, though, the EFO no longer pressed for countries to return to the gold standard in the 1930s in its then form.[42]

Despite these misgivings, when the Depression hit the philosophy of those within the EFO was still a commitment to classical economic liberalism. So, when the ILO began to talk about creating employment through public works schemes the EFO expressed strong opposition. Led by Salter, then Loveday, and in the Financial Committee through the British representative Frederick Leith-Ross, the chief economic and financial advisor to the British government (he held a bridging position between the Treasury, the Board of Trade, and the Foreign Office), the EFO remained strongly opposed to government intervention. This manifested itself through Leith-Ross's resistance to any meaningful discussion on unemployment or public works in the EFO or its associated committees. Like most policymakers and economists at the time, Leith-Ross, along with Loveday and the EFO, were convinced that the crisis should be allowed to run its own course, the repeat prescription of all previous responses to trade depressions. It was only from the mid-1930s as unemployment remained stubbornly high that the EFO and Loveday (although not Leith-Ross or the British Treasury) supported efforts to investigate ways of avoiding future depressions and switched its focus from, to paraphrase Loveday, the producer to the consumer.

League of Nations: The League of Nations Health Organization

The LNHO has occasionally been incorrectly described as an independent body. It was, in fact, like the EFO, a section within the League of Nations and as such had very similar characteristics: it had a Health Committee comprised of national representatives who were usually

[42] For a full discussion of the events leading up to the appointment of the Gold Delegation, its deliberations, conclusions, and legacy see Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 51-71 and P. Clavin and Jens-Wilhelm Wessels, 'Another Golden Idol? The League of Nations' Gold Delegation and the Great Depression, 1929-32', *The International History Review*, Vol. 26, 4 (Dec. 2004), pp. 765-95.

ministers of health; it employed a small, full-time secretariat, smaller even than the EFO; and from time-to-time it also employed outside experts to conduct individual surveys or investigations, some of whom joined the secretariat. In addition to its Health Committee, the LNHO had a Bureau, a sort of mini Health Committee that was empowered to initiate work for the organization as the Health Committee only met once a year. Unlike the EFO, the League's charter had made a reference to health although it was only a vague, brief article that suggested working with other organizations to 'improve health and the prevention of disease'. Moreover, no specific outcomes were outlined. Was it to merge with the *Office International d'Hygiène Publique*, an international health organization established in 1907 whose prime mandate was to monitor infectious diseases? Should it direct work through the League of Red Cross Societies, or was something else envisaged? The article in the League's charter underlines that health at that time was still very closely tied up with disease, much as it had been in the nineteenth century although some medical professionals, notably from Britain, had already begun to make plans at the end of the war for a broader mandate for an international health agency.[43] Nonetheless, it was the exigency surrounding a post-war typhus epidemic in Eastern Europe that prompted swift action by an inchoate League. Typhus, a parasitic bacterium passed on to humans through lice, fleas, and ticks, was endemic to Serbia and Russia, but the disorder and terrible conditions in Eastern Europe at the end of war threatened to send the disease west. The League, after hearing of the extent of the problem from a Polish epidemiologist Ludwik Rajchman, who had just founded the Hygiene Institute in Warsaw, and the Polish Minister of Health, Witold Chodzko, created an Epidemic Commission to help deal with the crisis. The success of the mission in combatting the disease, masterminded by Rajchman, coupled with the precedent set by international cooperation on health and disease, led to the

[43] See Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health*, pp. 18-25 for a discussion on 'What is Health?'.

establishment of a permanent health organization at the League with Rajchman as its head. Although something of an outsider for the role, Rajchman was known to senior medical professionals in Britain, France, and the USA by virtue of his research in the Pasteur Institute in Paris and the Royal Institute of Public Health in Britain before the war.[44]

Rajchman led the LNHO until the then Secretary-General Joseph Avenol forced him out as Director of the Health Section in February 1939.[45] By this time, Rajchman, a committed socialist, had offended many social and political conservatives by establishing links with Moscow and expressing his open hostility to Nazism and appeasement. He was, though, highly respected in the field of epidemiology and for the results that he achieved at the LNHO. A major breakthrough in the interwar period in the realm of social medicine, with the LNHO (and ILO) at the vanguard, saw a redefinition of the concept of health from one that had been concerned with disease, especially bacteriology, sanitation, and hygiene – a nineteenth century conception influenced by the effects of industrialization and urbanization – to the impact of social conditions (covered in chapters four and five).[46] It meant that in addition to becoming a repository of medical information the LNHO continued to expand its operations and reach under Rajchman's tutelage far beyond the original scope. The Depression was the catalyst that caused the LNHO to refocus and to study the social determinants of health but crucially, as Borowy pointed out, no other international health organization opted to undertake this role and conduct such systematic enquiries: not the *Office Internationale d'Hygiène publique* (*OIHP*), the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB), nor any of the philanthropic organizations. Part of the reason that the LNHO was

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[44] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, pp. 41-64; M. Balińska, *For the Good of Humanity: Ludwik Rajchman, Medical Statesman*, translated by Rebecca Howell and revised by the author (Budapest, 1998), pp. 29-33. (First published in 1995 as *Une vie pour l'humanitaire: Ludwik Rajchman, 1881-1965*).
[45] Dubin, 'League of Nations Health Organization', pp. 61-2.
[46] Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health*, pp. 18-23; I. Borowy, 'World Health in a Book – The International Health Yearbooks', in I. Borowy and W. Guner (eds.), *Facing Illness in Troubled Times: Health in Europe in the Interwar Years, 1918-1939* (Frankfurt, 2005), pp. 85-128, pp. 85-7.

able to evolve and to perform this role was because it did not have a fixed mandate; it was also led by a pioneer in Rajchman who was able and willing to redirect its focus and to develop new programmes as circumstances changed. From the very beginning he had an ambitious view for the LNHO seeing it as a political agent of peace and looking to utilize health to improve the world through cooperation, collaboration, and understanding.[47] He would often drive the agenda forward even to the point of making decisions unilaterally rather than putting them through the Health Committee and he constantly pressed for a more interventionist socially-oriented state. Inevitably this brought him into conflict with representatives of national governments who resented his politics and the challenge to state sovereignty.

George Buchanan, Senior Medical Officer in the Ministry of Health and a member of the Health Committee, was one such figure. Buchanan wholeheartedly supported the establishment of the Epidemic Commission in 1920 but he often complained to Rajchman and to the Health Committee about the reach of LNHO's activities. Buchanan viewed himself as an agent of his government and he believed that the LNHO as an institution should support governments. The American Surgeon General, Hugh Cumming, agreed with Buchanan for he too was also reluctant to over-commit the USA to international collaboration seeing the LNHO's involvement as interference in what were essentially national questions. Cumming was a prominent force on the LNHO's Health Committee from 1923-39, despite the fact that the USA never officially acknowledged that it collaborated with the League of Nations. It was, of course, an incredibly novel idea that outsiders from international organizations should be able to place themselves in a position to oversee, let alone to offer criticism of, national governments' policies. It was clearly a dilemma for national governments to have to come to terms with the emergence of supranational

[47] Transcript of a conversation between Rajchman and Gunn in Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health*, pp. 280-1.

organizations as power and national sovereignty continued to dominate their approach to international diplomacy. After all, the EFO and LNHO were not even enshrined in the Covenant of the League of Nations.

The LNHO did not face constant opposition, though. Buchanan promoted aspects of the LNHO's work when he felt that they were appropriate; the disagreements emerged when he believed that the LNHO's functions were extending too far. It is worth considering that the obstruction that the League and the ILO faced only serves to emphasize how innovative their studies were. Moreover, it challenges one aspect of realist international relations theory in respect of the LNHO as it shows that the members of the secretariat were not pawns of their national governments.[48] Rajchman also enjoyed generous support from other Health Committee members. Some, like the president Thorvald Madsen, a well-respected bacteriologist, were scientists who were far more inclined to promote international cooperation and collaboration.[49] The LNHO was in demand elsewhere, too. A number of states including China, Greece, and Japan approached the LNHO and asked for help with various aspects of their health provisions. The LNHO and the EFO had no mandate to intervene in any state at any level so they had to be invited by national governments. China was the stand-out case for the LNHO as it carried out four missions between 1926 and 1934 helping the Chinese authorities with the establishment of a quarantine system, a public health system, and disaster relief after massive floods in 1931.

More directly, the thesis is concerned with the radical development of the LNHO's decision to begin to investigate the effects of unemployment on the health of the individual. It became a major focus of the League's work through the LNHO and resulted in a fundamental re-evaluation

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[48] A. Wiener, 'Constructivism & sociological institutionalism', in M. Cini & A. Bourne, *Palgrave Advances in EU Studies* (2005), p. 35-55, p. 37.
[49] Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health*, p. 70.

of the LNHO's approach to public health that saw the integration of the social and economic spheres and caused the meanings of social and economic to shift. In turn, the focus of the ILO's work on social medicine shifted from hygiene, with its emphasis on epidemiology and disease containment and prevention, to health.[50]

The ILO, EFO, and the LNHO at work

The previous sections have indicated that there was something qualitatively different about the EFO, LNHO, and ILO: the scale, the ambition, and the means with which to act. This section seeks to show how the organizations worked in practice. One of the most interesting aspects about the senior staff of the EFO, LNHO, and ILO was their longevity of service. Rajchman, Loveday, and Thomas all joined the organizations at their inception and none chose to leave; Rajchman departed because his contract wasn't renewed. Butler was the only Director to resign and he only left in 1938 on a matter of principle as he was being pressured to appoint someone to a senior position against his wishes. Not only were these senior figures drawn to Geneva, then, but they were persuaded to stay. Certainly, they were well-numerated and they also enjoyed considerable prestige from holding senior roles. Loveday's diaries, for instance, are full of references to his frequent travels, largely in Paris and London, to meet with senior ministers and officials from ministries of finance and commerce, central banks, and on occasion Prime Ministers. This is not to say that high-ranking ministers gave the technical organizations of the League and the ILO an easy ride, but an opportunity emerged for the actors in the technical organizations to develop and shape 'social spaces'.[51] Acquiring such status wouldn't necessarily explain their prolonged service,

[50] P. Weindling, 'Social Medicine at the LNHO & ILO compared', in P. Weindling (ed.), *International Health Organizations and Movements, 1918–1939* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 134-53, pp. 143-4.
[51] M. Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca, 1996), p. 3.

however, and here the idea of a 'Geneva spirit' of the interwar years is persuasive. The senior figures, and their equally dedicated staff, came together and sought to promote internationalism and rose above pursuing national interests. By no means did they always agree, as the conflict between the EFO and ILO on economic policy and public works in the next chapter will highlight, but they identified universal issues and through collaboration and discussion they sought universal solutions. A clue as to how this spirit emerged can be offered through the First World War. Most of the senior figures in both the League and ILO – Thomas, Butler, Salter, Loveday, Rajchman, and Edward Phelan (the fourth Director of the ILO, 1941-8), worked in government departments that cooperated with other Allied bodies during the hostilities. If they had not already been persuaded of the benefits of international cooperation before the war, then the conflict provided firsthand experiences and heightened their belief, crucially, in terms of action and not just with words. It has been shown recently how important these networks were to the formation of the EFO.[52]

According to the realist school of international relations theory, if national interests are overcome by actors in international organizations, individuals can still be engaged in empire-building.[53] A certain leeway must be afforded the secretariats of the EFO, LNHO, and ILO here: they had to build empires because at the outset none of the organizations had a template to work from and they had to learn as they went along. The organizations were compelled to tap into networks and to use experts, in the process broadening existing networks or creating new ones, because the institutions were by any measure small affairs. In the 1930s, the EFO remained constant at around thirty members of staff but the LNHO saw its numbers dwindle from twenty in

[52] Y. Decorzant, 'Internationalism and the Economic and Financial Organization of the League of Nations', in D. Laqua (ed.) *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars* (London, 2011), pp. 115-33.
[53] See e.g. B. Verbeek, 'International Organizations', p. 14.

1931 to eleven in 1938. Normal practice was for experts to come to the League and ILO's attention via introductions from the secretariat's former colleagues or acquaintances, usually fellow nationals. The EFO, LNHO, and ILO then invited those individuals, for example, from the municipal level in housing or nutritionists, to investigate an issue or to join a committee. In this manner, established networks, whose impact at the national level had been inconsistent as they had been unable to access senior levels of government reliably, could apply their knowledge on a broader scale and reach a wider audience.

This is why the inter-governmental dimension was so crucial to the League's technical organizations and the ILO. Neither the expert committee nor the concept of the international organization was new – the League often referred to their committee approach as similar to that of the Royal Commission in Britain – but the evidence suggests that the increased influence enjoyed by the EFO, LNHO, and ILO and their ability to carve out space for international agency not only justified their existence but it also persuaded prominent experts to become involved in their work, at least for those who shared the ideals of international collaboration. In fact, many experts actively encouraged the EFO, LNHO, and ILO to assume a more prominent role and to show leadership and direction on matters which had an international dimension. John Boyd Orr, one of the foremost nutritionists of the era, was one such example. Boyd Orr was an eminent figure in the world of nutrition, Director of the Imperial Bureau of Animal Nutrition, Rowett Institute, Aberdeen, later appointed as the first Director-General of the FAO in 1946, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1949, backed by generous private and public endowments, and someone who enjoyed extensive contacts across the world. And yet he embraced the LNHO's agency in the nutrition sphere as a potentially crucial one. The universality of the nutrition issue convinced Boyd Orr that international cooperation was the most appropriate way to succeed. Replying in 1931 to the

LNHO's suggestions for a potential nutritional investigation, he noted, 'nutritional problems exist in every race and every community. Some of them are common to all civilized communities. Hence, they form a subject to the study of which concerted international effort might profitably be applied'.[54] Moreover, he believed that it was the LNHO that possessed the authority and should therefore take the responsibility to persuade institutions to initiate studies, and in doing so it could insist on the adoption of a uniform methodology and standardization.[55]

With the help of established and developing networks outside of Geneva, the technical organs were able to transfer their ideas from the international to the national. Even taking into account the internationalist credentials of those like Boyd Orr, one would still have expected him and other actors who worked with the organizations to have promoted their own interests too. Nonetheless, what is clear is that many of these relationships were close; the fact that so many of them endured throughout the entire interwar period offers strong evidence to suggest that they were mutually beneficial associations. Since the experts were the link between the international and the national, and as such crucial to the international organizations' ability to function effectively and to spread their message, it seems inevitable that the senior members of the secretariat sought allies who they believed would be supportive of the outlook, work, and goals of its technical branches. These tactics were employed in equal measure whether for information-gathering exercises on the activities and views of governments, for the employment of experts within the secretariat and on ad hoc projects, or for decisions surrounding the membership of their expert committees. The ability to call upon experts in this manner, especially regarding employment within the secretariat or for its expert committees, allowed the secretariats considerable scope to influence the agenda of these committees. This was less important for the

[54] LONA, R 5866/8A/24183/1409, Boyd Orr to Wastl, 8 June 1931.
[55] LONA, R 5866/8A/31243/1409, Boyd Orr to Aykroyd, 26 Oct. 1931.

ILO as the desire and ability to frame policy was effectively built into its fabric. The EFO and the LNHO, on the other hand, were supposed to be non-political and an international civil service in the image of the British civil service who acted as facilitators to the work originating from the Assembly and its inter-governmental standing committees.

For sure, appointments to the standing or ad hoc committees could be based on more obviously political or practical grounds. An interesting example, because it also highlights the involvement of the USSR in the League's activities (which will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on nutrition), was Rajchman's decision to include an official from the Soviet Union on the LNHO's Commission of Experts on nutrition. Rajchman may have been more inclined to look east than most of his colleagues at the League, and as a socialist he undoubtedly had sympathies for the Soviet model, but he was never blind to the limitations or the excesses of the Soviet regime. He was a Jewish Pole and an anti-imperialist but Rajchman was under no illusions that for the nation-state of Poland to survive it required engagement and to be at peace with the Soviet Union; his overtures to Moscow should therefore also be seen in that light.[56] Rajchman had in fact attempted to engage the Soviet authorities in the activities of the LNHO as early as 1921 when he was working desperately to contain the typhus epidemic, to which the Soviet government finally acquiesced, but despite his best efforts it was not until the USSR faced the existential threat of Nazi Germany that the Soviet government opted to engage formally with the League and the ILO by joining both organizations and participating in various aspects of its technical work. Pragmatic considerations could be a motivation for a state as well as for an international organization.

But it wasn't only the relationships between Geneva and their experts that were important. Governments gradually began to acknowledge the increasing legitimacy of the EFO, LNHO, and

[56] Balińska, *For the Good of Humanity*, pp. 49-51.

ILO even if the ultimate power rested with national governments. This took many forms: the technical agencies were asked to take on matters that no nation-state wanted to tackle; they were asked to coordinate, to investigate, and ultimately to shape some areas of international relations; they were asked to conduct enquiries where it was recognized that certain problems were universal; and, interestingly, they also became an avenue for diplomacy. Whilst the dealings between the secretariats and government ministers and officials were on occasions fraught with tension, the metropole nonetheless wanted to remain abreast of current opinion in Geneva. Governments sought to know not only of the inner workings of Geneva but they were able to use the secretariat as a source of information when they wanted to avoid normal diplomatic channels. During a meeting between British Prime Minister Ramsey Macdonald and Loveday ahead of the Disarmament Conference in 1932, for example, Macdonald asked Loveday if he was able to unearth the views of other governments.[57] In the same vein, government ministers or officials who shared similar ideals on a particular subject to one of the secretariats were able to facilitate their own interests by acquiring information from or, as the later chapters will show, choosing to work with Geneva.

[57] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, MSS Loveday 18/6 (Alexander Loveday Papers), Diary entry 18 Mar. 1932.

Chapter Two: Public Works and Economic Policy

This chapter focuses on the emergence of public works as a basis for tackling unemployment during the Great Depression and also reflects on the broader but less direct impact of economic policy; that is, how economies were 'run'. It is in four parts. It begins on the international stage and examines the ILO's reaction to the sudden and unrelenting rise in unemployment in 1930. It will show that the ILO's support and campaign for large-scale public works programmes began some time before any centralized government contemplated such action. It also examines what was distinctive about the ILO's research and policy proposals to create employment through public works, fiscal policy, and economic policy. There is an important distinction between ideas and policy, of course, but, as mentioned above, the key dynamic running through the ILO was the organization's practical outlook. Research was not seen as an end in itself but it was to be carried out with the intention of influencing policy and, ultimately, to improve the life of workers.

The second section moves on to the EFO's reaction to deteriorating economic conditions in the first years of the crisis, 1930-33. It reveals the EFO's initial reluctance to act on unemployment in the belief that the economic slowdown, like any other that had preceded it, should be allowed to run its course. It also looks at how the EFO and ILO's contrasting approaches played out in the corridors of Geneva, with particular attention on the committees established by the League to investigate the economic crisis. That being said, some cracks in the EFO's devotion to monetary orthodoxy had begun to appear, notably concerning the gold standard, although its unwillingness to support international or national efforts to finance public works during those early years of the crisis was unwavering.

The third section of this chapter considers national perspectives. It examines the ideas and influence of an increasingly wide group of economists who were developing innovative approaches to tackling unemployment through public works alongside new fiscal approaches and of the governments that chose to adopt these new ideas. It will also survey some of the arguments adopted by economists and governments that chose to avoid taking such action. The fourth and final section concentrates on the period after 1934. It reveals how the EFO's attitude towards the Depression and economic policy changed markedly as it pressed not only for theoretical studies to understand the causes of depressions, but how to prevent future depressions and how it became an advocate for more interventionist government policies, including policy proposals to create employment. This drew the EFO and the ILO into closer collaboration as their ideas began to converge about the necessary responses to counter unemployment that resulted from economic downturns.

An international agenda: the ILO and public works, 1930-1

In early March 1930, the ILO had already begun to receive worrying reports from its correspondent offices that unemployment was rising rapidly.[1] In the absence of any of the usual seasonal improvement during the spring and summer of 1930, the 50th Session of the ILO's Governing Body in October then presided over a lengthy discussion on the deteriorating unemployment situation describing it as 'appalling' and a 'terrible crisis'.[2] In Germany, unemployment had increased from (approximately) 8.4% in 1928 to average 22.2% in 1930 and it was rising fast: it averaged 33.7% in 1931 and 43.7% in 1932. In Britain, it rose from 11.2% in

[1] ILOA, XI 5/2/1, Unemployment (General memoranda and correspondence), Note by Childs to Maurette, 8 Mar. 1930.

[2] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 50th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Brussels, 11 Oct. 1930, pp. 683, 685.

1928 to average 16.1% in 1930 (and 21.3% in 1931 and 22.1% in 1932).[3] A general study into the causes of unemployment had already been proposed earlier in 1930 by the Swiss trade unionist Charles Schürch,[4] but it was the rapid increase in unemployment throughout 1930 that was the driving force behind Thomas and the ILO's abrupt shift of approach. Unemployment, for the ILO at least, thereafter became a problem to be addressed in its own right rather than be treated as a consequence of economic depressions triggered by monetary imbalances.

Schürch's suggestion was well received in the Governing Body although some of the employers' representatives attempted to limit the scope of any study. Others, meanwhile, demanded more. Léon Jouhaux called for an enquiry to extend beyond Schürch's idea of a theoretical investigation into unemployment and rather to strive 'by all possible means to arrive at practical results'. Thomas agreed and suggested that all methods that had been used previously to reduce unemployment should be analysed. Persuaded by Jouhaux and Thomas's arguments, the Governing Body passed a resolution instructing the ILO's Unemployment Committee[5] to reconvene and tasked it with investigating the general causes of unemployment and, crucially, to consider ways to resolve the unfolding unemployment crisis.[6]

The ILO's Unemployment Committee presented a provisional and concise report to the next session of the Governing Body in January 1931. It advocated that governments 'take all immediately practicable steps' and offered a series of proposals to tackle unemployment directly. These involved: public works; labour migration; international economic cooperation; labour

[3] Clavin, *Great Depression*, p. 112.
[4] ILOA, Proceedings of the 14th Session of the International Labour Conference, International Labour Office, Geneva, 16 June 1930, pp. 54-6.
[5] The ILO, like the League of Nations, had some permanent standing committees comprised of an equal number of representatives from the three groups within the ILO (workers, employers, and government representatives) although unlike the League's intergovernmental committees they tended to meet intermittently.
[6] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 50th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Brussels, 11 Oct. 1930, pp. 683-96, 788-9.

exchanges; and unemployment insurance (the latter, it stressed, was to help the distress caused by unemployment and was not seen as a cure). It also added that it believed that the USSR and Turkey should be included in the discussions, an invitation which the USSR accepted.[7] Public works and migration (which will be covered in chapter three) thereafter became the cornerstone of the ILO strategy to reduce unemployment in the belief that these could be implemented the quickest. The overriding concern at that time was to elicit a swift response from national and international authorities to address what was seen as a distressing and deteriorating situation.

Regarding public works, the initial report of the ILO's Unemployment Committee stated that governments should consider 'undertaking extensive public works of national utility...at the same time expanding orders for supplies, so as to counteract the effects of a falling off of activity in private enterprise; the possibility of governments coming to an agreement...with a view to joint execution of extensive public works of an international character'.[8] Two important points stand out here. Firstly, the intellectual underpinning provided by the ILO's research carried out in the 1920s (mentioned in Chapter One), which was evident in the suggestion that public works through government intervention were required to counter the decline in private investment and demand. Secondly, international public works were referred at that time only as a 'possibility', subordinated behind national works. However, Thomas was galvanized by the potential to internationalize public works because he recognized that it created an opportunity for joint and concerted action against unemployment.

Thomas was quick to shift the emphasis to an international agenda through a unique opening that had arisen: the establishment of the Commission of Enquiry for European Union (CEEU) that had been established by a League resolution in September 1930. Aristide Briand's

[7] LONA, R 2856/10D/25852/12378, ILO Unemployment Committee Report, Jan. 1931.
[8] LONA, R 2856/10D/12378/12378, ILO Unemployment Committee Report, Jan. 1931.

initial speech at the League for a 'United States of Europe' in September 1929 was well received, but by the time he delivered his memorandum the following May the economic and political climate had shifted and it was granted a much cooler welcome by most European governments. The CEEU was established in an attempt to give it some traction.[9] It was described as an 'enquiry into cooperation between European governments in every sphere of international work' but had economic issues 'uppermost in their thoughts'.[10] This is evident from the numerous sub-committees that were established to investigate economic and financial issues. It was recognized that the onset of the Depression ensured that some of the problems would be far harder to solve, particularly surrounding intra-European trade barriers, but it also meant that new issues had arisen, such as unemployment, that required solving. Thomas knew that national governments were reluctant to support public works schemes because of their commitment to monetary orthodoxy but he identified the potential that the CEEU offered as a way to present public works as a solution to unemployment in the context of European reconstruction.[11] He also hoped that public works programmes would be carried out on a far larger scale than had previously been contemplated and that they should be viewed as investment; formerly, the ILO's framing of public works had been 'national...and small scale'.[12] The establishment of the CEEU enabled Thomas and the ILO to flavour their requests for public works projects in an international language. This has additional

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[9] Anne-Isabelle Richard-Picchi, 'Colonialism and the European Movement in France and the Netherlands, 1925-1936', (Cambridge University, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 2010), pp. 34, 37.
[10] Bodleian Law Library, Oxford, O.LN per.1, League of Nations, Work of the Commission of Enquiry for European Union, Circular letter from the Secretary-General to all European States Members of the League of Nations, 30 Oct. 1930, *League of Nations Official Journal* (Dec. 1930), p. 1779; Commission of Enquiry for European Union, Minutes of the First Session, 23 Sep. 1930, *League of Nations Official Journal* (Dec. 1930), p. 1781. A note written by the Economic Section was quite clear about the motivation to create the CEEU: how could Europe compete against the US but the emphasis on economics had to be tempered for fear of upsetting the US. See LONA, S 68, De Bordes files: Miscellaneous, 1927-32, Memorandum on "The United States of Europe" Idea, 2 Sep. 1929.
[11] Lespinet-Moret and Liebeskind-Sauthier, 'Albert Thomas, le BIT et le chômage', p, 177.
[12] Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations*, p. 94.

historiographical significance in that it shows that it is difficult to pigeon-hole economics into the 'national'.

Thomas was able to persuade the redirection towards the international during an ILO Governing Body session that considered the Unemployment Committee's report of January 1931. Thomas suggested to this meeting that the ILO should produce an amended memorandum for its next Unemployment Committee meeting in May of 1931 which would in turn be presented to the CEEU meeting which followed it shortly after. Public works, he said, should be presented with an international outlook and he made various suggestions: a linked road system, railways with automatic coupling, navigable waterways, water supply, drainage, and an ambitious scheme for the electrification of Europe. These would improve the environment in which to conduct cross-border European trade which would increase economic activity, confidence, and promote a 'European spirit'.[13]

At the time, the stress on large-scale international rather than national public works was a speculative leap by Thomas. The ILO had not approached any governments or other international technical organizations nor had it analysed the effects of such an approach. In any event, it was a significant intervention that helped to propel the ILO towards much more proactive policies to counter unemployment, although it was not until August 1932 that the theoretical basis for this approach was presented. 'World Economic Reconstruction' by Percival Martin, published in the *International Labour Review*, was a commentary on a resolution that had been passed at the International Labour Conference in April 1932. It called for large-scale international public works alongside a demand to address the reparations problem, monetary stability, and an examination of

[13] LONA, R 2856/10D/12378/12378, Proposals of the ILO for practical action in connection with unemployment, 15 Apr. 1931.

the problems of production and international trade.[14] Endres and Fleming termed this 1932 resolution as 'historic' and 'a major shift in thinking' but evidently Thomas and the ILO had considered public works on a larger scale from early 1931.[15] Martin's article offered justification for a public works policy arguing that it would provide employment, improved infrastructure, and, of prime importance, it would increase aggregate demand. Following the thread of the position laid out in *Unemployment and Public Works*, Martin also raised the critical issue of financing by suggesting that if public works were 'suitably financed' by a government loan, for example, it would 'galvanise idle capital'. In addition, he discussed how these works should be accompanied by the international coordination of monetary policies in order to avoid price instability or exchange rate problems that could be caused by increased economic activity.[16] As well as a call to national policymakers to work together and mend some of the fractures caused by the banking and financial crises of the summer of 1931, Martin's paper was designed to allay the fears of economic liberals of the potentially inflationary effects of a public works policy and to counteract any potential external financial imbalances that might occur.

By 1932, then, the ILO's intellectual journey had moved from a position where it had viewed public works as temporary, emergency measures to overcome cyclical unemployment and which were financed from available resources to one where public works, financed through budget deficits, were synonymous with public investment and which would provide for 'long-term social and industrial development', whilst also being on a scale large enough to overcome cyclical unemployment and boost aggregate demand.[17] Thomas's call for a programme of public works in

[14] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, P.W. Martin, 'World Economic Reconstruction: An Analysis of the Economic Resolution adopted by the International Labour Conference', *International Labour Review*, Vol 26, No. 2 (Aug. 1932), pp. 199-220.
[15] Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations*, p. 95.
[16] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, P.W. Martin, 'World Economic Reconstruction', pp. 201, 203-06.
[17] Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations*, p. 103.

an international perspective was evidence of his instinct – and others within the ILO – that public authorities needed to intervene to compensate for deficient private investment in such a depressed economic climate. Moreover, it highlighted the ILO's ability to adapt policies to the circumstances or opportunities that faced them.

This latter point can help explain the Eurocentrism displayed by Thomas in his adoption of the CEEU to promote international public works. Thomas had begun to project a global outlook looking to spread the ILO's message by establishing contact with workers' organizations outside of Europe and through the opening of correspondent offices. But here, by promoting the idea that public works should be carried out as much for the purposes of creating a 'European spirit' as for economic utility, Thomas was merely taking advantage of the European angle to help sell the argument of tackling unemployment. Thomas's intervention was also surely more of a reflection of the widespread view amongst the secretariats of both the League and the ILO that the obstacles preventing economic recovery were as much political as they were economic. Normally the ILO was extremely sensitive to how opponents criticized public works as being economically worthless, but the ILO's new thinking on public works as investment encouraged it to counter these arguments as planned economic and social development on infrastructure rather than as ad hoc relief work.[18]

The maturation of the ILO's intellectual development on public works offers the opportunity to reflect on the historiography of public works and employment policies. Although the thesis does not consider the specific outcomes of the technical work undertaken by the League and ILO at the national level (in any chapter) – a problematic exercise anyway[19] – the inclusion of

[18] LONA, R 3005/10E/28945/28528, CEEU, Credit Problems Committee, Memorandum of the ILO on the Question of Public Works, 7 Aug 1931.
[19] D. Winch, *Economics and Policy: A Historical Study* (London, 1969), p. 19.

a subject attributes that particular subject a certain relevance and importance. In this manner, the intellectual contributions of the ILO's economists to the debate surrounding public works in the 1930s can be considered significant. Endres and Fleming certainly believed so, maintaining that the ILO researchers were 'progressive and innovative' and that Keynes should have granted them 'a more fitting tribute than a footnote reference in the *General Theory*'.[20] Keynes stated that the ILO had shown a 'consistent appreciation' of the benefits of a 'national investment programme directed towards an optimum level of domestic unemployment',[21] a statement that does scant justice to the archival evidence.

Whilst the historiography of the economic recovery and the reduction of unemployment in Germany, Sweden, and the USA have reduced the importance of public works and expansive fiscal policies in the 1930s, this does not render the ILO's devotion to public works as misguided. Thomas and the ILO never proclaimed that public works schemes were the only answer to curing unemployment; they saw them as part of the answer. Thomas was not under any illusions that the proposed remedies on public works would cure the crisis or that they would necessarily be of immediate economic value; rather, the purpose of the proposals was to try to alleviate the worst of the distress, to provide at the very least some employment, and to offer a boost to business confidence. Many government, League, and EFO officials consistently expressed the opinion that psychological factors prevented a revival and that people needed to recover their confidence. However, few concrete policies to try to stimulate that missing ingredient were proposed. A 'limited but...definite utility' in reducing unemployment defined the ILO's view. The idea of trying to tackle the crisis in small stages, to try something such as public works to relieve at least some

[20] Endres and Fleming, *International Organizations*, pp. 103-4.
[21] J.M. Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (London, 1936), p. 349.

unemployment became Thomas and the ILO's consistent theme, to show that something could be done to halt the vicious circle of increasing unemployment and economic contraction.

A much harder question to quantify in terms of economic recovery in Germany (through fair means and foul), Sweden, and the USA was how far it was the expectation that the governments were determined to implement new policies that contributed to the revival. What can be said was that all three governments certainly gave the impression that they were willing to experiment and all enjoyed comparatively strong economic recoveries. In this manner, the relative importance of public works and fiscal experimentation having declined in the historiography does not diminish from the role and foresight of the ILO in its promotion of public works as a means to boost employment. Interestingly, Thomas and the ILO's stance mirrored observations made by the Swedish academic Bertil Ohlin in two related articles in the *International Labour Review* in 1935, and in deliberations during the EFO's Delegation on Economic Depressions that sat from 1938 (which will be discussed in greater detail in the third part of the chapter). Ohlin, one of the pioneers of the macroeconomic revolution in Sweden during the 1930s, supported public works as a counter-cyclical policy to combat unemployment, but he sensed that it was being seen as a panacea to the Great Depression. He believed that so much emphasis was being placed on instigating additional public works that the 'danger' was that they came to be seen as the depression policy.[22]

One further point about the ILO must be made here. The implication has been that the entire ILO constituency unanimously backed the proposals on public works. Thomas was, indeed, a persuasive and commanding Director but some delegates and/or members of the Governing Body were unconvinced that the proposals would be beneficial. During a discussion in April 1931

[22] LONA, D.D.E./50, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Basis of Discussion for Report, Part B, Policies Directed toward Achieving Greater Stability in Total Demand, 22 June 1939; LONA, R 4453/10A/36595/ 32649, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Minutes of First Session, 30 June 1938.

concerning the ILO’s Unemployment Committee’s proposals Müller, the German workers representative, was ‘greatly disappointed’ and claimed that a belief that the proposed solutions would reduce unemployment was, based on recent German experience, ‘illusory’. The despair was evident in Müller’s contribution to the debate, which was no doubt coloured by the German experience of the Depression and the unemployment situation in 1931. He said that he could not see ‘what useful purpose’ an international labour exchange could serve because in Germany the exchanges were already ‘overwhelmed with applicants’, and that they had been reduced to registering the unemployed. In addition, he could not see how public works on the scale envisaged by Thomas could be financed. Jouhaux, on the other hand, no doubt influenced by the less severe experience of the Depression in France where, he said, there was still demand for agricultural workers, believed that an international labour exchange could offer ‘great service’. Others, meanwhile, criticized the memorandum for not addressing economic issues such as tariffs or pushing for the normalisation of money markets. National governments’ responses were mixed too. Following Thomas’s suggestion to promote international public works the ILO asked national governments for their proposals for possible public works projects with cross-border potential that could help alleviate unemployment. Several countries failed to respond, including Denmark, Britain, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and the USSR. The USSR uniquely declared that it suffered no unemployment. The British government upheld its view that public works were of no value, although its reply to the ILO was couched in a more conciliatory tone; international works, it suggested, were only relevant for those states with contiguous borders. Others did not submit plans because they had too little time to consider what proposals to put forward or because of concerns about financing.

Thomas attempted to address all these concerns. To allay fears that economic factors – ostensibly outside their purview – had not been covered by the ILO he proposed that they should collaborate again with the EFO on a mixed committee on unemployment. He stressed that the Unemployment Committee's ideas were not a remedy for the crisis or designed to eliminate unemployment but were aimed at reducing it. He even acknowledged that some national public works schemes had proved to be disappointing in the past. Nonetheless, he believed that that should not deter works from being used as a viable policy in the future. Whatever problems existed had to be overcome since depressions would recur and even if the ideas could not be of benefit for the immediate crisis he felt that they could be applied to the next one. Moreover, endemic unemployment, so prevalent since the First World War, could at last be addressed.[23]

The EFO: *The Course and Phases of the World Economic Depression*[24] and opposition to public works

At the same time as the ILO had initiated its campaign to tackle unemployment through public works, the League's Assembly of September 1930 tasked the EFO with conducting an investigation into the causes of the Depression. Bertil Ohlin, a young, upcoming academic at Stockholm University, was selected to carry out the enquiry and his final report, *The Course and Phases of the World Economic Depression*, was published in September 1931. It was not an enquiry into unemployment or one that offered any remedies for unemployment; that, of course, is revealing of the thinking and attitudes inside the EFO at the time especially since unemployment

[23] LON, R 2856/10D/12378/12378, CEEU, Unemployment Committee, Memorandum by the ILO, 29 June 1931; ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of 52nd Session of Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 22 Apr. 1931, pp. 312-17, 326-31; LON, R 2856/10D/12378/12378, Proposals of the International Labour Office for practical action in connection with unemployment, 15 Apr. 1931.

[24] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 52, B. Ohlin (League of Nations), *The Course and Phases of the World Economic Depression* (Geneva, 1931).

was one of the three questions that the Assembly instructed the EFO to investigate. Salter and Loveday, the most senior EFO officials along with Stoppani, remained committed to monetary orthodoxy and, as such, they were unconvinced of the efficacy of any investigation and did not support the Assembly's decision to conduct a depression enquiry. Salter did acknowledge that the Depression had caused strains to 'liberal economic policy'[25] and later affirmed that he became a convert to Keynesian ideas when he returned to Britain in 1931,[26] but at the time that he left his post at the League at the end of 1930 he still opposed a more interventionist approach. Salter confirmed as much in a reply to the International Society of League of Nations Unions in November 1930 who had written to the League and had asked for an international conference on unemployment, stating that 'it is likely that this crisis will cure itself in time rather than be cured by deliberate action. The danger is that action taken will prolong it and cause continuing trouble when it has gone'. He contended that a conference to try to halt 'remedial measures' – his reference to protectionist trade policies – would be of more benefit and suggested that the League of Nations Unions concentrate their efforts to that end. He conceded that 'it may be possible to take measures to prevent or mitigate the next crisis' (his emphasis).[27] In contrast, the ILO's Harold Butler informed the same Society of League of Nations Unions that unemployment was 'the most important and urgent international problem' and that any dialogue about unemployment would be beneficial.[28]

Like Salter, Loveday believed that prominence should be given to trade and protection, 'to persuade governments to abstain from taking defensive action...rather than on more positive

[25] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, p. 73.
[26] A. Salter, *Slave of the Lamp: a Public Servant's Notebook*, (London 1967).
[27] LONA, R 2856/10D/25852/12378, Note by Salter to Secretary-General Drummond, 21 Nov. 1930.
[28] LONA, R 2856/10D/25852/12378, Butler to Small, 16 Feb. 1931.

suggestions'.[29] He too expected the crisis to be over soon and saw little value in investigating its causes whilst the Depression was ongoing. Nonetheless, he recognized the political pressure and the importance that some attached to such an enquiry noting that a number of 'left-wing governments' had pressed for an enquiry in 'a rather forlorn hope that it may throw light on the [unemployment] question in such a manner as to aid them in the framing of their economic policy'.[30] He also told Ohlin early in 1931 that if the situation in Europe was to worsen there may be 'considerable agitation for something "serious" to be done about unemployment' (his emphasis).[31] Loveday's comments certainly belied his view that he saw little or no value in understanding unemployment in an international context at that time.

Despite Loveday's opposition to the idea of an enquiry it was he who made the interesting choice of Ohlin to conduct the enquiry. Loveday contacted a former colleague in the EFO, Per Jacobsson, the Swedish academic of notable repute who was appointed to the Bank for International Settlements at its inception in 1931 and who later became head of the International Monetary Fund, to ask if he thought that Ohlin would be interested in conducting the investigation for the EFO. As a measure of how much authority the League's heads of section enjoyed, Loveday explained to Jacobsson that he had not yet spoken to anyone else about the appointment, and that included the Secretary-General.[32] Although neither Ohlin nor his colleagues' ideas had reached intellectual maturity at this time, he was already an integral member of the 'Stockholm School' and his views towards state intervention were certainly evolving in this new direction. In June 1931, he gave a lecture in Norway that advocated a dual policy of state borrowing and monetary policy as a remedy for the Depression. Intellectually these ideas were far removed from Loveday's

[29] LONA, R 2856/10D/25852/12378, Loveday to Small, 10 Jan. 1931.
[30] LONA, Loveday Private Papers, P141a, Loveday to Jacobsson, 1 Oct. 1930.
[31] LONA, Loveday Private Papers, P142a, Loveday to Ohlin, 27 Jan. 1931.
[32] LONA, Loveday Private Papers, P141a, Loveday to Jacobsson, 1 Oct. 1930.

more orthodox view (at the time of Ohlin's appointment) of balanced budgets and adherence to the gold standard and Loveday was certainly not unaware of Ohlin's developing thought when he selected him. The appointment might seem strange, therefore, but most likely Loveday believed that as a relatively young and unknown academic – at least outside Sweden – that Ohlin would be more malleable. After all, as head of the Financial Section, Loveday oversaw every stage of Ohlin's investigation.

The catalyst for the Depression enquiry was undoubtedly the sudden deterioration in economic conditions during 1930, but the path to it was nonetheless not straightforward. Unemployment had noticeably worsened during the early part of the year but the subject of the depression *per se* was not on the Assembly's agenda of September 1930. Instead, a preliminary discussion took place in the Assembly on broad 'economic subjects', which was then referred to the Second Committee for further debate. Discussions in the Second Committee soon became 'dominated throughout by the worldwide economic depression' and a proposal by the Indian delegation to instigate an enquiry was accepted. When the discussion returned to the Assembly feelings continued to run high. The Romanian delegate Virgile Madgearu made a passionate plea for action citing his dismay at the continued and 'unprecedentedly high' tariffs against agricultural products by 'industrial countries'. The Depression, he believed, was 'profounder, more far-reaching, and more tragic in its effects' than any previously experienced. The depression in agriculture was especially severe, which had in turn impacted on the wider European economy and led to increasing unemployment. The Polish delegate Hipolit Gliwic described the 'sinister shadow of the unparalleled crisis which looms over every country', a crisis that had thrown 'millions out of work and has reduced millions more of women and children to starvation'. Interestingly, the Bulgarian delegate Athanase Bouroff pointed out that agricultural countries had been suffering for

some time with cereal prices having already fallen by 50%. Their interventions in the Assembly served to emphasize the particular severity of the Depression in Central and Eastern Europe.[33] In general, the richer north and western European countries did not express the Depression in such alarmist terms, but they were nonetheless alive to the scale of agricultural depression in Eastern Europe. The Assembly duly confirmed the Indian resolution and instructed the EFO to 'undertake the study of the course and phases of the present depression and the circumstances which led up to it'.[34] It proposed three areas of investigation: the depression, specific agricultural problems, and unemployment. It was suggested that the enquiry should consult national organizations or other bodies, including research institutions, that were already engaged in similar work. It also suggested coordination and cooperation with the agricultural experts that had met in Geneva earlier in 1930 and with the ILO on their work on unemployment.

Ohlin's study was extensive, time-consuming, and international in scope. Although the Assembly resolution that called for the enquiry did not directly demand remedies for unemployment, it did state that the investigation was to be conducted with a view to the EFO collating all available information in order to effect 'international action' on unemployment when circumstances allowed.[35] When Ohlin had completed his report he therefore suggested to Loveday and Stoppani that as an adjunct he should present some recommendations to the Economic and Financial Committees 'on the various possibilities as to action against the depression'. This is an important point because it would be easy to see Ohlin's report as an orthodox attempt by the EFO

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[33] Bodleian Law Library, Oxford, O.LN per.1, League of Nations, Record of the 11th Assembly, Thirteenth Plenary meeting, 16 Sep. 1930, *League of Nations Official Journal* (Dec. 1930), p. 99; Second Committee, Fifth Meeting, 22 Sep. 1930, *League of Nations Official Journal* (Dec. 1930), p. 181; Twentieth Plenary Meeting, 2 Oct. 1930, *League of Nations Official Journal* (Dec. 1930), pp. 415-19.
[34] LONA, R 2882/10D/22556/22556, Report and Draft Resolutions presented by the Second Committee to the Assembly, 29 Sep. 1930, p. 10.
[35] LONA, R 2982/10D/22556/22556, Report and Draft Resolutions presented by the Second Committee to the Assembly, 29 Sep. 1930, p. 10.

to neuter something more revolutionary, such as Mosley's memorandum or Keynes's backing for large-scale public works. Ohlin indicated to Loveday and Stoppani that a distinction should be made between political obstacles, which in his view the world was overly focused on, and instead it should concentrate on 'action against the depression'; that is, interventionist measures that would aid 'real recovery'. He stated that he felt that the League would be showing leadership to the world if the EFO was able to present concrete measures to combat the depression.[36] Loveday and Stoppani were nonetheless reluctant to publicize Ohlin's ideas, mindful perhaps of how recommendations from an outside expert would sit with the ministers and government representatives on the Economic and Financial Committees whose governments had steadfastly maintained monetary orthodoxy. Loveday and Stoppani eventually agreed to allow Ohlin to produce recommendations although with a notable qualification: they were to be produced in Ohlin's name, not the League's.[37]

Ohlin's report was duly presented to the Assembly in September 1931. Despite the further headwinds caused by that summer's financial crisis, the Assembly decided to postpone any subsequent depression enquiries for a year. The Hoover moratorium of June 1931 had shifted the politics of international economic relations towards reparations and war debts and, as such, the Assembly ordered the EFO to concentrate its resources on the Lausanne Conference, which was due to open in June 1932.[38] Loveday concurred with that decision although he did explain to Edward Eyre Hunt, who served as an expert on a number of advisory committees to the American government in the 1920s and 1930s, including Hoover's Emergency Committee for Employment, that this was not due to waning interest at the EFO for the depression investigation. Nonetheless,

[36] LONA, R 2883/10D/33123/22556, Ohlin to Stoppani, 13 Oct. 1931.
[37] LONA, R 2883/10D/33123/22556, Stoppani to Ohlin, 1 Dec. 1931. There was no record in the archives of Ohlin's suggestions, however.
[38] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, p. 78.

the fact that Loveday was content to delay further enquiries reveals much about the League and the EFO's attitude and priorities at that time, since it was congruent with the underlying belief that state intervention should be restricted to removing the impediments to international relations, i.e. reparations and war debts, disarmament, and protectionism, and there lay the key to economic revival.[39]

The depression investigations may have been postponed for a year but the Ohlin enquiry heralded a 'natural sequel',[40] the *World Economic Survey*, published in August 1932 and thereafter annually until 1944. The first author was John Bell Condliffe, an economics professor from New Zealand who subsequently left the EFO in 1937 for the University of California, Berkeley. His replacement was James Meade, a disciple of Keynes in Cambridge, a selection which serves to reinforce the diverse intellectual range of those appointed to work for the EFO. Meade, incidentally, was the joint winner with Bertil Ohlin of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1977. The *World Economic Survey* was a commentary on the international economic scene and a significant development in the history of the EFO since it allowed the EFO to broaden its purview yet further by opining on the world's largest economies. It did, as usual, limit itself largely to the British Dominions, Europe, Japan, and the USA and although this can be explained, again, by the absence of reliable data from other countries, it does seem like an important opportunity was missed to diversify its global reach. A second strand of enquiries that developed out of Ohlin's study was a long-term research project on business cycles that was published in

[39] LONA, Loveday Private Papers, P142a, Loveday to Hunt, 29 Oct. 1931.
[40] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 24, League of Nations, *World Economic Survey 1931-2* (Geneva, 1932), p. 7.

1937 as *Prosperity and Depression* by Gottfried von Haberler (discussed in more detail below, see p. 94).[41]

The ILO, it seems, had little to say on Ohlin's *The Course and Phases of the World Economic Depression*, easily explained by Ohlin's lack of attention to unemployment. There is nothing in the archives to suggest that the ILO was aware of any recommendations by Ohlin that he may have presented to the EFO's committees. Ohlin's report was presented to a CEEU meeting in May 1931 – which the ILO attended – but by then the ILO had already formulated its own proposals on how to counter unemployment, which Thomas submitted to the same meeting. Indeed, the CEEU was sympathetic to Thomas and the ILO's concerns expressing 'grave' concern with the unemployment situation in Europe. It then decided to establish its own Unemployment Committee, one of the many sub-committees that it created across a range of issues. The CEEU's Unemployment Committee comprised six government delegates from the CEEU and, as a measure of the importance of the ILO's contribution to the debate on unemployment, six members from the ILO's Governing Body (which reflected the ILO's usual structure: two from the government group, two from the employers', and two from the workers' group).[42]

The CEEU Unemployment Committee's first meeting in May 1931 granted a sympathetic hearing to the ILO's proposals on public works to tackle unemployment and accepted the ILO's report. For sure, the presence of ILO representatives enabled the ILO to present a convincing argument. Giuseppe di Michelis, the Italian ILO government representative and chairman of the CEEU's Unemployment Committee, left his colleagues in no doubt that attempts should be made

[41] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 53, G. von Haberler, *Prosperity and Depression: A Theoretical Analysis of Cyclical Movements*, (Geneva, 1939).
[42] LONA, R 2882/10D/28393/22566, CEEU, Economic Depression, 14 May 1931.

to stimulate employment: 'it was impossible to overemphasize the close connection, as increasingly brought out by the progressive world depression, between unemployment measures and the general effort to economic recovery'.[43] The conclusions of the CEEU's Unemployment Committee followed the ILO's lead and were based around two main proposals: the international placing of workers – migration – and public works. But since the committee realized that the schemes for public works required the raising of significant sums of capital and, cognisant of international money market conditions, it concluded its findings with a directive to the CEEU's Credit Problems Committee – another of the CEEU's sub-committees – to investigate urgently a course that would facilitate the funding of large-scale public works projects. This demonstrates vividly how the problems of unemployment spilled out and connected to wider issues. The CEEU's Credit Problems Committee had been established in May 1931 at the prompting of the French government, who had sent the CEEU a memorandum asking whether investigation of 'systematic intervention by the Financial Committee' could be employed to coordinate and provide emergency assistance to those countries requiring capital.[44] The French proposal was aimed at helping Central and Eastern Europe but the CEEU identified that this new initiative offered the opportunity to foster closer financial collaboration across all of Europe. The CEEU therefore instructed the Credit Problems Committee to concentrate on long-term credits and to investigate the 'practical steps' that the League could take to encourage new international issues in the main money market centres. Moreover, when the ILO presented its ideas on combating unemployment, the CEEU specifically directed the Credit Problems Committee to consider the various proposals of the ILO 'with a view

[43] LONA, R 2912/10D/30959/28648, CEEU, Economic Co-ordination Committee, 1 Sep. 1931, Report of the Unemployment Committee, p. 31.
[44] LONA, R 3005/10E/30857/28558, Report of the Committee on Credit Problems, 28 Aug. 1931, p. 1.

to relieving unemployment by means of important public works'.[45] However, the timing was dire. It was initiated just before the financial crises that hit many of Europe's commercial banks in the early summer of 1931, and the subsequent concomitant effects on government finances in what would be described today as a sovereign debt crisis. Rapid descent into economic nationalism followed.

Nevertheless, the idea to generate capital on an international basis was a significant proposal to counter the credit crisis. In fact, the EFO's Financial Committee had already set a precedent in an attempt to alleviate credit problems, albeit on a much smaller scale. The scheme in question, the International Agricultural Mortgage Credit Company, which the League's Council approved in May 1931, will be discussed in more detail in chapter five.[46] Briefly, its aim was to help European agriculture that had been shattered by protectionism, overproduction, and the collapse in prices.[47] The proposal was to create a capital fund from individual state contributions under the umbrella of an international institution, which could offer aid to poorer agricultural states where national credit companies or mortgage banks were unable to provide capital or were non-existent. The EFO believed that capital imbalances had been 'a serious hindrance' to the development of commercial relations between industrial and agricultural countries due to political intervention and this scheme was its attempted remedy.[48] This action could be seen as an incipient scheme to promote development in less developed economies, albeit one that was driven by the agricultural depression, and one that is a recurring theme in the thesis seen in the chapters on housing and nutrition (chapters four and five). That the scheme was approved by the Council shows

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[45] LONA, R 2660/10A/28453/2697, Financial Committee, Resolutions and Decisions of the Council and of the Commission of Enquiry for European Union, May 1931.
[46] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 131, League of Nations, *International Agricultural Mortgage Credit Company* (Geneva, 1931).
[47] Clavin, *Great Depression*, pp. 78-81, 100-05.
[48] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 131, League of Nations, *International Agricultural Mortgage Credit Company*, p. 6.

that it had support amongst national governments, through their representatives at the League and ILO, and that they were happy to acknowledge that there was a role for the League and ILO to operate at a supranational level.

Turning now to the proposed financing of public works, one idea put forward by Emile Francqui, a Belgian banker and government representative on several of the EFO's committees, entailed a new international bank for the financing of public works programmes. The proposal was to raise both public and private capital, thus overcoming the issue of limited public resources and political interference, with the BIS rediscounting up to £10 million of commercial paper, which would then allow Ivar Kreuger, a wealthy, private Swedish financier, to underwrite new issues. Francqui said that they should utilize the experiences of countries like the Netherlands, France, Germany, and Belgium that had used private capital – although on a smaller scale – to finance long-term credits for international commerce. Another financing idea, the Kindersley Plan, devised by Robert Kindersley and Montagu Norman, respectively a director and the Governor of the Bank of England, also envisaged a new international institution that the major banks of Britain, France, and the USA would subscribe to, and which, in turn, would raise money from the public and lend it to governments, municipal authorities, public utilities, and mortgage banks. The intention was to try to redistribute the gold that had been attracted to France and the USA, which was in essence 'idle' as it was simply sitting in their vaults and not being recirculated back into the global money supply.[49] Another of the CEEU's sub-committees, its Committee of Economic Experts, also stressed the urgent need for the recirculation of capital in the world and that a new institution

[49] Eichengreen and James, 'Monetary and Financial Reform', pp. 524-5; S. Howson and D. Winch, *The Economic Advisory Council 1930-1939: A Study in Economic Advice during Depression and Recovery* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 117-18.

should be set up that would bring together 'borrowing and lending markets...including transactions connected with the execution of public works'.[50]

These financing schemes never had a chance to get off the ground. National differences were too raw as French and American officials were quick to voice disapproval of outside criticism of actions over 'their' gold reserves.[51] Moreover, the EFO's Financial Committee and the CEEU's Credit Problems Committee were both dominated by the economically orthodox Briton, Frederick Leith-Ross. As a marker of his determination to control the international economic debate, Leith-Ross tried to exclude the ILO from attending the main preparatory committee during discussions concerning the agenda for the World Economic Conference of 1933. Ultimately, his wish was not fulfilled. Nevertheless, when it came to the discussions in the financial sub-committee about public works as a means to counter unemployment, Leith-Ross, confirming the British Treasury position, stated that he saw no benefits whatsoever in public works. He asserted his belief that they would not reduce unemployment or alleviate the crisis and that it was a futile discussion unless funding was possible. This was, of course, what the CEEU's Credit Problems Committee had been asked to investigate eighteen months previously (see p. 61). Leith-Ross had an important ally within the

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[50] LONA, R 2912/10D/29365/28721, CEEU, Committee of Economic Experts, Sub-Committee examination of financial problems, July 1931.

[51] The gold standard enjoyed wide support amongst central bankers, finance officials, and financiers although many realized that the system was imperfect. By the late 1920s, it had become obvious to the Governor of the Bank of England, Montagu Norman, along with his colleagues at the Bank of England and the Treasury that the gold standard was not operating according to its assumed rules. Britain, amongst others, was 'losing' gold to France and the US but after rebuttals by the French and American governments to consider discussing the issue British officials gently persuaded the League's Council to appoint a 'Gold Delegation' in the summer of 1929 as a sub-committee of the Financial Committee. Clavin and Wessels have revealed that the British contingent, along with other of their allies, pressed for a thorough investigation of the maldistribution of gold rather than the delegation's prescribed, limiting remit. Criticism of French and American hoarding of gold led to several heated clashes. Official British backing was never explicit, though, and, as the economic and political climate changed markedly during the committee's term (1929 to 1932), British officials had no desire after 1931 to be accused of condemning the Americans or the French for exercising a monetary squeeze on the world that had caused the Great Depression, certainly once Britain had decided to leave the gold standard. Interestingly, though, in a significant policy shift, the EFO no longer pressed for countries to return to the gold standard after 1929. For a full discussion of the events leading up to the appointment of the Gold Delegation, its deliberations, conclusions, and legacy see Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 51-71 and Clavin and Wessels, 'Another Golden Idol?', pp. 765-95.

EFO's secretariat at that time too. Loveday was also sceptical of the benefits of public works. He expressed doubt that public works alone could raise prices or instigate a trade revival. In his review of Keynes's 1932 Halley Stewart lecture in which Keynes had called for state investment to compensate for the decline in private expenditure, Loveday noted that 'government investments, simply because undertaken by a government, 'may well prove "bad"'.[52]

Thus, because of the opposition centred around the likes of Leith-Ross, the CEEU's Credit Committee did not even consider the Francqui scheme. It admitted that capital existed in abundance, but it was 'premature in the present circumstances' and would not become 'fully available until confidence is gradually restored...only with a visible improvement in economic and political conditions' would it be possible to rebuild that confidence and revive trade. The Credit Committee added that it was not their place to suggest the economic or financial measures which might correct the imbalances in the economic system. It was a startling response, of course, as the committee could have been the force that tried to stimulate the international capital markets and rebuild confidence. The Credit Committee's remit was to investigate 'practical steps...to facilitate Government loans' with specific reference to long-term credit and public works, but it simply did not examine those issues adequately. Its recommendations for the crisis followed a well-worn path: future government securities used to finance state loans should be more widely traded internationally; the Financial Committee should maintain closer links with those authorities that it lent to; and the Financial Committee should cooperate closely with the BIS. It felt little or no responsibility to intervene to counteract the world's financial impasse despite all the proposals presented to it. Public works, it seems, continued to be contaminated as 'relief' works however much the likes of Thomas or Butler tried to disassociate them from their nineteenth-century cousin,

[52] LONA, Loveday Private Papers, P141a, Internal EFO memorandum, undated.

and to present them as public investment in infrastructure, reconstruction, and a pathway to economic recovery.

With the Financial Committee having previously identified and resolved to correct one of the major issues preventing agricultural recovery – the lack of credit without which businesses cannot function – and that a delegation from the Financial Committee sat on the Credit Problems Committee, it seems extraordinary that they did not pursue similar solutions to try to free up capital to stimulate the broader economy. After all, the plan for the International Agricultural Mortgage Company, which was to be a new institution that would borrow in its own name in the international money markets and lend through local or national agricultural banks, was analogous to the various – admittedly much larger – schemes offered at the time to fund the public works programmes. The Financial Committee had acknowledged the budgetary constraints when the Agricultural Scheme was being presented and yet it still pushed for government-backed advances as that was, it believed, the only way that the plan could achieve success. If governments were to supply guarantees it would 'manifest a feeling of mutual solidarity and a general desire for collaboration is likely to have an effect on financial markets to which we attach the greatest significance'.[53] In other words, it would give a substantial boost to confidence.

Although there was much opposition to public works at the national level and within the EFO, some pockets of support did emerge through the League's deliberations. In September 1931, William Borberg, the Permanent Danish representative at the League and its representative on the League's Second Committee,[54] stated that 'it was essential that public works and other measures

[53] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 131, League of Nations, *International Agricultural Mortgage Credit Company*, pp. 7, 9.

[54] The Assembly decided what work would be undertaken by the various technical sections but, because it had so many issues to cover and to leave it time to deal with the important political questions of the day, it delegated this authority to a series of sub-committees. The Second Committee was responsible for economic and financial matters. In theory, then, the Second Committee debated and decided the programme of work for the EFO but in practice

should be undertaken to fight unemployment and depression'. Whilst others sought to temper those comments, the Second Committee concluded that 'it thought that it was desirable to contemplate *the execution of large public works* undertaken jointly by public or private bodies...subject to the financial considerations, such a programme would primarily have the effect of remedying to some extent the distressing unemployment crisis' (its emphasis).[55] The CEEU's Economic Co-ordination Committee (another sub-committee)[56] also published an assessment of the CEEU's investigations into economic problems in September 1931 that had been carried out up to that point. It highlighted the 'exceptionally acute...unemployment crisis' and eagerly endorsed the plans for the international placing of workers and public works that had been presented by its Unemployment Committee. It 'firmly believed that the execution of public works of common interest might be very valuable to European co-operation'. Its conclusion was notable for the remarkable similarity to Thomas's pronouncements that there was no single cure for the Depression. There was, it stated, 'no one miraculous prescription capable of restoring economic equilibrium', and it advised policymakers 'to discard every preconceived opinion, to be guided by experience, and to seek for remedies wherever there seems to be a chance of finding them'.[57]

Despite the explicit opposition within the EFO from Leith-Ross and Loveday, the proposals for public works were not entirely dead. The Credit Problems Committee, charged with investigating the public works schemes, had earlier delayed a decision over whether to authorize

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national considerations dominated. For a detailed explanation of the Second Committee's role in the work of the EFO, see Clavin and Wessels, 'Transnationalism and the League of Nations', pp. 477-81.

[55] ILOA, Harold Butler Cabinet Files, XR 25/4/26, League Journal No. 16, 24 Sep. 1931, Minutes of 2nd Committee 13th Meeting 23 Sep. 1931; LONA, R 2913/10D/31321/28721, Report and Draft Resolutions Submitted by the Second Committee to the Assembly, 23 Sep. 1931.

[56] The CEEU's Economic Co-ordination Committee was, as the name suggests, the focal point for the various economic committees that the CEEU had created to investigate all issues concerning credit problems, agriculture, and unemployment.

[57] LONA, R 2911/10D/30918/28648, Report submitted by Co-ordination Sub-Committee on Economic Questions, 4 Sep. 1931, pp. 5-6.

the works, asserting that it was not suitably qualified to judge the 'technical or economic value' of the projects in question. It therefore suggested to the League's Council that the League's Communication and Transit Organization (CTO) examine the 'economic necessity of the public works...and their chances of profits and productivity at an early date'. Nonetheless, it made it abundantly clear that it retained financial, and therefore overall, control by insisting that any decisions on the public works in question would have to be referred back to the Financial Committee 'in all cases'.[58] The proposals were subsequently referred to the CTO's Committee of Enquiry on Questions Relating to Public Works and National Technical Equipment[59] which examined about twenty European plans that it believed were of sufficient quality to consider. It set three criteria by which to judge their utility: the effect on unemployment, since this was the ILO's main objective when they asked governments to suggest public works schemes; the productivity or economic value, which did not have to be strictly 'self-supporting' but it was to aim to improve industrial or agricultural development; and the level of international interest, since the ILO's request had been for schemes to be of interest to more than one country.[60] The Committee of Enquiry retained twelve of the plans, subject to a final confirmation of a practical assessment on the ground, which it submitted to the League's Council. They included roads, bridges, railways, irrigation, drainage and water supply, and the electrification of the Warsaw suburban railway.[61]

It is instructive that the public works schemes that were submitted to and approved by the CEEU were all from eastern and southern European states: Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia, Poland,

[58] LONA, R 3005/10E/30857/28558, Report of the Committee on Credit Problems, 28 Aug. 1931, pp. 2-4.
[59] The CTO had established this Committee of Enquiry in June 1931 after receiving a request from the Chinese government for advice regarding general questions on public works. This followed a mission to China by Rajchman, Salter and Robert Haas, the Director of the CTO, to China during the winter of 1930-1 and was another example of the League branching out, when requested, to facilitate development.
[60] LONA, C.C.T./T.P.O.N., Communications and Transit Organization, Committee of Enquiry on Questions Relating to Public Works and National Technical Equipment, Report on the First Two Sessions of the Committee, 15 Apr. 1932.
[61] ILOA, L 1/14/1000/2, League of Nations, Note by the Information Section on Public Works, 8 Apr. 1932.

Romania and Yugoslavia. A number of forces were at work here. The motivations for or against public works of the larger, more industrialized northern and western European nations, which had incidentally declined to submit any plans in response to the ILO's request, were discussed in the chapter's first section. For the major powers, economic policy was incontestably a sovereign issue and senior government officials such as Leith-Ross fought stubbornly to ensure that neither the League nor the ILO encroach on sensitive areas of national government policy. On the other hand, 'the European movement' was shaped by the imperial experience. The more industrialized north and west, led by the colonial powers, especially Britain, France, and the Netherlands, viewed the poorer south and east as they did their own colonies. They saw the south and east as underdeveloped and were prepared to intervene in their affairs in the form of informing, aiding, and providing them assistance.[62] The League appeared comfortable in this role. The EFO, for instance, had helped to coordinate the financial stabilization of Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia in the early 1920s[63] and, as later chapters will show, Eastern Europe was very much in focus in the League's responses to unemployment through nutrition and housing. Geopolitics was undoubtedly at work here as French foreign policy after the First World War was largely based around security to restrict German militarism and to build alliances in Central and Eastern Europe. This worked both ways, though, for Central and Eastern European states had security concerns of their own.[64]

The twelve plans for public works accepted by the CTO's Committee of Enquiry were submitted to the League's Council. Provisionally approved, the Council nonetheless asked the

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[62] Richard-Picchi, 'Colonialism and the European Movement'.
[63] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 26-33, 96.
[64] N. Jordan, 'The Cut Price War on the Peripheries: The French general Staff, The Rhineland and Czechoslovakia', in R. Boyce and E. Robertson, *Paths to War: New Essays on the Origins of the Second World War* (Basingstoke, 1989), pp. 128-66, p. 129-130; Steiner, *Triumph of the Dark*, pp. 68, 160, 167, 368.

Committee of Enquiry to continue its work and reserved a decision until it had received the Committee's next report. Thus, the proposals were not considered by the Council again until September 1932. During that next meeting, the Council decided to forward the proposals to the Preparatory Committee of Experts, which had been set up to produce an agenda for the World Monetary and Economic Conference that was to commence in June 1933.[65]

The League's apparent lack of urgency did not prevent the ILO from continuing to press for action. At the 55th Session of the ILO's Governing Body in October 1931, Léon Jouhaux urged that the ILO take immediate steps to counter unemployment for he thought that any measures taken at the national level up to that time had been mere 'palliatives', and rather than unemployment abating he foresaw it worsening as they approached the coming winter. Dr Oscar Weigert, the German government representative to the ILO's Governing Body, concurred with Jouhaux; both expressed frustration with the lack of progress to act on the ILO's public works agenda. Weigert declared that the German government had long been in favour of public works although he acknowledged that the most important question was one of finance. Thomas accepted the criticism that progress had been protracted but the Transit and Communication Committee had begun to consider the schemes so the issue now was enlisting the support of national governments.[66] After Thomas's death in May 1932, Butler, appointed as Thomas's successor, resumed the ILO's calls for action. A resolution concerning large-scale international public works schemes was passed again at the International Labour Conference in April 1932, which was sent to the League's Council who adopted it and referred it to the Assembly. Butler followed up with a request to the Secretary-General Drummond on the eve of the 1932 Assembly in which he asked for the CEEU's

[65] LONA, R 2856/10D/122378/12378, Butler to Drummond, 26 Sep. 1932.
[66] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of 55th Session of Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 17 Oct. 1931, pp. 644-5; Minutes of 56th Session of Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 14 Jan. 1932, pp. 35-37.

Unemployment Committee to reconvene to discuss prompt implementation of the projects already approved by the CTO's Committee of Enquiry.[67] Joseph Avenol, replying on behalf of Drummond, said that the League's Council had already transmitted the CTO's proposals on public works to the Preparatory Committee of Experts set up for the World Economic Conference.[68] Just a few days later Butler backed up his demand to Drummond by personally presenting the ILO resolutions to the Assembly. He asserted that public works would be the most effective way to have an immediate impact on unemployment and he reminded the Assembly that Thomas had resolutely urged this path since the beginning of 1931. Even a small amount of work for the unemployed, he declared, would have 'immense moral influence' and with an astute expression of flattery suggested that it would improve the League's public image as a force for good, 'to enhance its prestige in the eyes of the masses'.[69] There was no reason to delay, he pleaded.

Despite Butler's perseverance, his request to the Assembly for immediate action was overlooked since, as Avenol had informed him, the proposals were already being considered for inclusion on the agenda of the World Economic Conference. Strangely, the CTO's Committee of Enquiry had decided to present its report to the Preparatory Committee in February 1933 'almost entirely from the point of view of the problem of the *resumption* of international investments and of capital movements' (emphasis added).[70] It was surprising because the CTO's Committee of Enquiry was a body that had been established to investigate public works from a purely engineering perspective. As a report from an earlier session of September 1932 had confirmed, it had at that time only examined the 'technical and economic value' and did not even consider it

[67] LONA, R 2856/10D/12378/12378, Butler to Drummond, 26 Sep. 1932.
[68] LONA, R 2856/10D/12378/12378, Avenol to Butler, 12 Oct. 1932.
[69] LONA, R 2856/10D/12378/12378, Memo by the International Labour Office on the resolution of the International Labour Conference of 20 Apr. 1932, presented to the League of Nations Assembly, 30 Sep. 1932.
[70] LONA, C.C.T./T.P.O.N./50(2), Committee of Enquiry on Questions relating to Public Works and National Technical Equipment, General Report by the Committee, submitted to the Monetary and Economic Conference, 9 June 1933.

necessary to consider the financing of such schemes. The suspicion has to be that outside influences, possibly the EFO or the presence of Leith-Ross on the Preparatory Committee of Experts for the World Economic Conference, persuaded the CTO's Committee of Enquiry to change the emphasis of its report to concentrate on finance. Thus, the World Monetary and Economic Conference, established to cure the worst economic, financial, and social catastrophe to affect the world since the modern capitalist economy had developed, only indirectly included the question of unemployment through public works under the 'Resumption of Capital Flows'. In the event, the discussion at the Conference was brief as the CTO's report from the World Monetary and Economic Conference later revealed.[71] The British delegation once again voiced their opposition to public works by asserting that it would be too costly to do so even in Eastern Europe.[72] The lack of any meaningful discussion at the Conference prompted the French delegation to suggest that a sub-committee be formed to continue the study on public works and other ways to reduce unemployment. This committee, however, was never convened although in subsequent years preparatory papers were put together.[73]

National perspectives on unemployment: economic orthodoxy and policy innovation

Looking at developments at the national level, there were at least four groups or individuals who were at the vanguard of the ideas' revolution: Keynes and his disciples in Cambridge; the 'Stockholm School' at Stockholm University that included Gunnar Myrdal and Bertil Ohlin; the

[71] LONA, C.C.T./T.P.O.N./52, Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transport, Public Works, 22 Aug. 1933.
[72] E. van Der Vleuten, I. Anastasiadou, V. Lagendik, and F. Schipper, 'Europe's System Builders: The Contested Shaping of Transnational Road, Electricity and Rail Networks', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Aug. 2007), pp. 321-47, p. 334.
[73] LONA, D.D.E./2, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Activities of the CTO and ILO in connection with Public Works, Note by the Secretariat, 8 Apr. 1938.

Russian émigré Wladimir Woytinsky; and the Pole Michal Kalecki. Each developed their own theories separately but all advocated two crucial ingredients: firstly, large-scale public works to tackle unemployment should be additional government expenditure, i.e. supplementary to that already planned in order to boost aggregate demand and to make up the deficiency in the private sector; and secondly, the projects were to be financed by new government borrowing.

For Keynes, the conception of demand management did not achieve intellectual maturation until 1936 and the publication of the *General Theory*.[74] But his ideas supporting large-scale public works appeared from the late 1920s as a result of his association with Lloyd-George's rump of the Liberal Party, notably, *Can Lloyd-George Do It*[75], written jointly with Hubert Henderson in the pamphlet of support for the Liberals in the 1929 election; in *The Means to Prosperity*[76] in 1933; and as a member of the Economic Advisory Council which was created by the Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald early in 1930 to deal with Britain's economic woes.[77] Keynes was a consistent supporter of large-scale public works schemes that he believed would create employment for at least 500,000, perhaps one million, people in the construction of roads, bridges and other transport facilities, housing and slum clearance, and the development of the electrical and telephone networks. Economists have since reduced the estimates of potential job creation to 300,000, although this would still have been a significant increase in employment and one that surely would have provided a boost to confidence in business activity, something which Keynes, amongst others, recognized.[78]

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[74] Keynes, *General Theory*; Clavin, *Great Depression*, p. 141.
[75] J.M. Keynes, *Can Lloyd-George Do It: An Examination of the Liberal Pledge* (London, 1929).
[76] J.M. Keynes, *The Means to Prosperity* (London, 1933).
[77] Howson and Winch, *Economic Advisory Council*.
[78] R. Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes. Volume Two. The Economist as Saviour, 1920-1937* (London, 1992), pp. 297-304; Clavin, *Great Depression*, pp. 141-3.

Keynes by no means worked alone, of course. One crucial intervention, amongst his close colleagues and collaborators in the 'Cambridge Circus', was that of Richard Kahn's 'multiplier' published in June 1931.[79] Kahn, with the assistance of James Meade, set out to counter the criticisms made against public works programmes that they were a waste of government expenditure through the calculation of the quantitative effects of such schemes. He did so by looking at the stimulant effect of the primary employment – provided by the initial investment – on to secondary employment on other goods and services. Kahn's multiplier estimate of two has since been challenged as being overly optimistic, but Keynes immediately saw its value in countering critics over the financing of public works schemes. Many contemporaries remained unconvinced, however, not least Henderson, Dennis Robertson, Keynes's long-time collaborator in Cambridge, and crucially the Treasury.[80]

On the face of it the Labour Party, which held longstanding concerns about the stubbornness of unemployment in Britain in the 1920s, should have had much in common with Keynes. It went into the 1929 General Election with its own twenty-point plan to 'conquer unemployment' including considerable attention on public works schemes but the plan notably criticized Lloyd-George's ideas for being based on government borrowing to carry out the proposed works.[81] As the Depression took hold during 1930 and government finances came under increasing pressure, Ramsey MacDonald and his Chancellor Phillip Snowden remained committed to economic orthodoxy. The formative ideas being developed by contemporary economists in favour of government borrowing to fund public works, therefore, found few supporters except on the radical left. One notable enthusiast was Oswald Mosley. Long persuaded by underconsumption

[79] R. Kahn, 'The Relation of Home Investment to Unemployment', *Economic Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 162 (June 1931), pp. 173-98.
[80] Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes*, pp. 448-52.
[81] Labour Party, *Labour's Reply to Lloyd-George: How to Conquer Unemployment* (London, 1929).

theories he suggested in a pamphlet as early as 1925 that an unbalanced budget might be necessary to bridge the potential employment output gap. Appointed a minister by MacDonald after the May 1929 election, although outside the Cabinet, Mosley was tasked with formulating ideas for employment. As the Depression intensified he became increasingly frustrated with his colleagues' inaction and decided to bring his ideas together in the famous Mosley memorandum that he sent to MacDonald in January 1930. Amongst a broader set of initiatives, including appointing Keynes as head of an economic task force, he called for a £200 million scheme of public works to be financed by government borrowing. Although he found some support within the party he was rebuffed once again by the leadership and resigned in May 1930.[82]

The opponents of state spending to reduce unemployment through public works throughout the 1930s were numerous in Britain. The Treasury, with Chancellor Philip Snowden at the apex, was fully supported by the business community, all of whom objected on a number of grounds. The arguments against included: public works would do nothing to address structural unemployment which had afflicted Britain since the 1920-21 depression; it was the role of local, not central government to provide employment through works programmes which would, in any case, be unable to expedite the works; if funds were spent on public works then everyone would be asking for something extra e.g. higher pensions or more unemployment benefit; and lastly any public expenditure would 'crowd out' private expenditure.[83]

Most important of all, though, was that the Treasury, the government, and the Bank of England continued to adhere to economic orthodoxy based around two central pillars: balancing the government's budget annually and membership of the international gold standard. In fact, this

[82] R. Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (London, 1990), pp. 177, 186-97, 209-10.
[83] C. Feinstein, P. Temin, and G. Toniolo, *The European Economy Between the Wars* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 139-42; Clavin, *Great Depression*, p. 143.

was global monetary orthodoxy. Most governments believed that the gold standard, combined with fiscal responsibility, helped them achieve the central aim of economic policy: monetary stability. This ensured confidence in the entire monetary and financial system, which in turn allowed trade to prosper, and if trade continued unhindered then the economy would flourish (the concept of economic growth had, of course, not been 'discovered' yet) and unemployment would be minimal or non-existent. This was (the fallacious) economic equilibrium. And therein lies the major problem during the Great Depression: unemployment was seen as a symptom of broader economic policy aims. Although in Britain the Labour Party was unusual in that they had suggested that unemployment should be addressed directly in its own right, once in power unemployment became subsumed beneath budgetary restraint and a determination to stay on the gold standard. This policy objective ensured that the Bank of England was compelled to keep interest rates high during the late 1920s up until the summer of 1931 as Britain was 'losing' gold to France and the USA. Only when the government chose to abandon the gold standard and let the pound float freely in September 1931 was the Bank of England able to reduce interest rates from 6% in September 1931 to 2% June 1932 where they remained until the outbreak of the Second World War. The subsequent reduction in long-term interest rates – important as that was the rate at which the government borrowed money – combined with the National Government's decision to opt for protectionism with its Empire, helped to fuel economic recovery. But, crucially, even when Britain came off of the gold standard government policy remained steadfast in its desire to balance the budget annually.[84] This put paid to any attempts by the likes of Keynes to persuade the government to borrow money to fund public works because fiscal policy remained in a permanent state of retrenchment (at least until rearmament kicked in).

[84] Feinstein, Temin, and Toniolo*, European Economy Between the Wars*, pp. 139-42; Clavin, *Great Depression*, pp. 141-3.

France had a different experience of the Great Depression. The undervalued *franc Poincaré* allowed France to experience something of an export boom from 1929-31 as the rest of the world plunged into depression. But whilst those countries that came left the gold standard in September 1931 enjoyed some semblance of an economic recovery in 1933 and beyond, French government policy was still dictated by the desire to maintain the value of the re-established franc through the monetary and fiscal orthodoxy that it had returned to in 1928. After 1933, French export industries suffered immensely, the 'new' industries including chemicals and cars proved unable to deliver much growth, housebuilding virtually stopped, and unemployment rose markedly. Nonetheless, it still remained low compared to its economic rivals, peaking at 434,000 in 1936 – as measured by those receiving benefit – although the figures obscured much underemployment. Léon Blum's Popular Front government attempted to break the deflationary cycle in 1936 by raising aggregate demand through wage increases for the working classes and also a planned 20 million Francs of public works over four years. But, as with his predecessors, the strain on government finances caused Blum to U-turn and seek retrenchment in government spending after just a few months of his 'experiment', and he resigned soon after in June 1937.[85]

Some other countries, however, became open to radical policy suggestions as the Depression intensified during the early 1930s. In Sweden, the coalition of Social Democrats and the Farmers' party that came together in 1932 embraced the new ideas emerging from the 'Stockholm School' of economists: Erik Lindahl, Gunnar Myrdal, and Bertil Ohlin. All three provided contributions to the Swedish government's Committee on Unemployment whilst Myrdal's association with the Social Democrat Party went deeper still. He joined the party in 1932, was elected to the upper chamber in 1936, and was also appointed as an advisor to Ernst Wigforss,

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[85] T. Kemp, *The French Economy 1913-39: The History of Decline* (London, 1972), pp. 100-10, 116-18; J. Jackson, *The Politics of Depression in France, 1932-36* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 202-08.

the Minister of Finance. Wigforss was an early convert to the new interventionist economics of the 1930s and is widely regarded as having been the driving force behind the policy innovations introduced by the Social Democrat Party. Soon after election to office Wigforss invited Myrdal to produce a list of policy ideas to fight the depression. Myrdal's 279-page document, presented in early 1934, contained solutions similar to those simultaneously being developed in Cambridge. Myrdal derided the economic orthodoxy that insisted on balancing a government's budget annually. This meant that during a contraction in economic activity the inevitable shortfall in government revenues had to be corrected with spending cuts. But Myrdal argued that this government retrenchment exacerbated an already deteriorating economic and financial situation – as the Great Depression had highlighted with such devastating consequences – and reduced 'aggregate spending' in the economy. Rather, he stated, a government should do exactly the opposite and pursue expansionist economic policies funded by government borrowing. The increase in economic activity would in turn have a positive impact on other businesses, mirroring Kahn's multiplier effect. To fund these counter-cyclical policies a budget should be balanced over many years with the deficits accumulated in depression years 'paid off' by budget surpluses when the economy was prospering. As further justification Myrdal added that public works were an investment in 'public assets' and not merely a payment like an unemployment dole for which there was no future benefit.[86] Wigforss's government duly initiated unemployment policies that were centred on subsidies to building, to agriculture, and public works programmes. In an extra effort to boost demand in the economy, they paid workers on government schemes at market rates rather than the usual practice that paid workers at a considerably lower rate. All the schemes were funded

[86] W. Barber, *Gunnar Myrdal: An Intellectual Biography* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. xii, 38-45.

by government borrowing backed up with the crucial, new approach of balancing the government budget over many years i.e. over the economic cycle.

The apparent success of Wigforss's government served to justify post-Second World War welfare states across Europe based on the Swedish 'model'. However, whilst unemployment fell sharply in Sweden after 1932, it is now widely acknowledged that the sums involved were rather modest and perhaps less innovative than propagated at the time. Spending by the government only added up to about 1% of GNP between 1932 and 1934.[87] Myrdal, reviewing the Swedish government's experiment in 1938, certainly thought so; he believed that the execution of his ideas had only been 'half-hearted', but that did not alter his belief that it was absolutely the right path to follow.[88] Ohlin, too, writing in 1935, did not think that government borrowing could explain the turn in the business cycle in the spring of 1933. Rather, he believed that it was the rise in exports that was the most important factor behind economic recovery and, therefore, it was the decision to follow Britain off of the gold standard in September 1931, which allowed the krona to depreciate, that pulled the Swedish economy from the abyss. Nonetheless, Ohlin contended that once the economy had started to improve the effects of government borrowing that, in his words, had been 'large-scale', combined with investment in public works that was in 'very great proportions', was much more important from 1934. The Swedish Central Bank also bought government bonds which helped to fund public works, to lower interest rates, and to prop up the banks. Declining interest rates and better capitalization consequently helped the banks to extend credit to business. Above

[87] B. Gustafsson, 'Unemployment and fiscal policy in Sweden during the 1930s: myths & realities', in W. Garside, *Capitalism in Crisis: International responses to the Great Depression*, pp. 56-69; Clavin, *Great Depression*, pp. 142-3.

[88] Barber, *Gunnar Myrdal*, p. 43.

all, the policies produced a strong recovery in housebuilding with concomitant effects on the timber industry, and later rearmament firstly to Germany and then to Britain.[89]

Ohlin, like Myrdal, certainly believed that the Swedish government had made the right policy choices. His interesting observations on the new direction in economic policy were also laced with trenchant criticisms of economic orthodoxy and its supporters. He pointed out that the government's fiscal position had 'not been damaged' by government borrowing; thus, for 'financially strong' countries, large-scale borrowing (in the Swedish experience) during a depression was 'sound and practicable'. The idea promoted by bankers that inflation would ensue if the budget was not balanced every year had proved to be wrong and had 'done much harm'; rather, he asserted, the budget should be balanced over a number of years as the government had concluded. 'Exceptional' loans were to be repaid when 'good business conditions' returned. The basic premise of the policy was to maintain demand although he added one caveat; it was only to be undertaken if it did not 'crowd out' private demand.[90]

The German government, like so many of the others during 1930, had no sense that the Depression was going to be any worse than a normal trade downturn. Hence, there was no incentive for more proactive policies. But as conditions deteriorated in 1931 with unemployment averaging 33.7% during the year, and exacerbated by the German banking crisis of that summer, the government remained committed to the deflationary policies of balancing the federal budget and remaining on the gold standard. Certainly the policy tools available to the German government were more limited than in Sweden (or Britain), for instance. A devaluation of the Reichsmark was

[89] W.R. Garside, 'Introduction', in W.R. Garside, *Capitalism in Crisis: International responses to the Great Depression*, pp. 1-7; R. McKibbin, 'The Economic Policy of the Second Labour Government, 1929-31', *Past & Present*, Vol. 68, 1 (1975), pp. 95-123; Feinstein, Temin, and Toniolo, *European Economy Between the Wars*, p. 143; Clavin, *Great Depression*, pp. 142-3.
[90] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, B. Ohlin, 'Economic Recovery and Labour Market Problems in Sweden: I', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Apr. 1935), pp. 498-511; B. Ohlin, 'Economic Recovery and Labour Market Problems in Sweden: II', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 31, No. 5 (May 1935), pp. 670-99.

not only prohibited under international treaty but it was considered an unrealistic option given that Germany was so reliant on short-term international financing; any devaluation would have increased Germany's foreign debts in terms of Reichsmarks. The government was further constrained by its predecessors' failures over the hyperinflation of 1923 as policymakers feared that a devaluation, which would raise import prices, would give the impression that the government was set on an inflationary path again. It was also concerned about its capability of persuading investors to take up deficit-financed bonds. International politics was critical here, too, as the Brüning government, in power from March 1930 until May 1932, attempted to deflect criticism of Germany's precarious financial position by laying the blame firmly on reparations.[91]

However, even with the government committed to economic orthodoxy discussions in Germany about remedies to fight unemployment became increasingly common during 1931.[92] The WTB plan, named after three economists who penned it, Wladimir Woytinsky, Fritz Tarnow, and Fritz Baade (a Social Democrat member of the Reichstag) was presented in January 1932 and called for massive public works. Woytinsky, born in Russia, was a radical whose opposition to the Tsar was rewarded with exile to Siberia in 1908, which postponed his burgeoning economics career. Freed during the February revolution of 1917, he served in the Kerensky government but fled Russia after opting to back the Mensheviks during the October 1917 revolution. In 1929, Woytinsky was appointed the Research Director of the Statistical Department of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (ADGB, the German Trade Union Federation).[93] Woytinsky later worked for the ILO between 1933 and 1935. Since Tarnow was also a board member of the ADGB,

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[91] A. Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London, 2006), pp. 16-19, 24-9; Clavin, *Great Depression*, pp. 117-19.
[92] Clavin, *Great Depression*, p. 141.
[93] E. Woytinsky (ed.), *So Much Alive: The Life and Work of Wladimir S. Woytinsky* (New York, 1962), pp. xix; F. Baade, 'Fighting Depression in Germany', in Woytinsky, *So Much Alive*, pp. 61-8, p. 64.

the unions' self-interest cannot be overlooked but the WTB plan found some support across a broader constituency, notably Wilhelm Lautenbach, of the Economics Ministry, and Günther Gereke, a State Commissioner of public works. With unemployment continuing to rise rapidly the Brüning government eventually decided to back the WTB plan but only if the budget was balanced. Here, then, was the critical difference to the Swedish model; by the time the plan was introduced, the stimulus was only 135 million Reichsmarks. Papen continued these small expansionary policies when he replaced Brüning in May 1932 and added some extra tax credits and subsidies for new employment schemes. However, it was only after agreement on reparations was reached in September 1932 and General Kurt von Schleicher became Chancellor in December 1932 that a national work creation programme of some substance was introduced: 600 million Reichsmarks which was all credit-financed.[94]

Schleicher did not last long, of course, and none of the money had been allocated by the time Hitler became Chancellor. As unemployment fell sharply from 1933 it was, therefore, the Nazis who were long regarded as one of the innovators of the 1930s of state intervention through budget deficits to fund large-scale work creation schemes. The view that the Nazis' main economic policy concern was unemployment has now been revised, however. Not only were continuities with the previous regime identified but the economic transformation that emerged under Nazi Germany rested as much on other factors as on work creation schemes. A cyclical economic recovery had already started to take hold towards the end of 1932, the Nazis' manipulated the unemployment figures by coercing labour to sign up to the work creation schemes, and, of course, it imprisoned political opponents. But more important still was that the Nazis' economic policies

[94] Feinstein, Temin, and Toniolo, *European Economy Between the Wars*, pp. 120-3, 143-5; Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, pp. 30-1, 39-41.

focused on addressing foreign debts, agricultural protection and development, and, crucially, rearmament.[95]

The identification in recent historical scholarship of the true nature of the economic transformation under the Nazis cannot, however, obscure the fact that contemporaries at the time believed that the Nazis were incredibly successful in tackling unemployment. Of course, a carefully orchestrated propaganda campaign was specifically created for this purpose, but since recovery occurred so suddenly and dynamically it gave traction to the argument that the Nazis were indeed doing something right. Although they promised immediate and substantial action on unemployment, the Nazis had no coherent plan when Hitler was appointed Chancellor. In many ways, though, they did not need one; they simply adopted Schleicher's plan. What the Nazis did, however, was to move swiftly by fully allocating Schleicher's 600 million Reichsmarks by the late summer of 1933. Of that sum 190 million RM was diverted to the military which, as Tooze has recently argued, showed that rearmament was top of the Nazis' agenda from the moment they attained power.[96]

The Nazis' expansionist programme soon built up momentum. A one billion Reichsmark scheme, the first of the Reinhardt programme, was approved at the end of May 1933 to continue when Schleicher's original scheme ended. The funds were granted through the provinces and communes for agricultural housing and farm improvements, housing estates, municipal works, and public utilities, although an increasing sum was set aside for the Reich's 'special measures'; that

[95] H. James, 'Innovation and conservatism in economic recovery: the alleged 'Nazi recovery' of the 1930s', in W.R. Garside, *Capitalism in Crisis: International Responses to the Great Depression* (London, 1993), pp. 70-95; R.J. Evans, 'Introduction: The Experience of Unemployment in the Weimar Republic', in R.J. Evans and D. Geary, *The German Unemployed: Experiences and Consequences of Mass Unemployment from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich (*London, 1987), pp. 1-22; B. Wulff, 'The Third Reich and the Unemployed: National Socialist Work-creation Schemes in Hamburg 1933-4', in Evans and Geary, *The German Unemployed*, pp. 281-302; Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, pp. 24-33; Clavin, *Great Depression*, p. 171.

[96] Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, pp. 39-47.

is, military infrastructure of airfields and waterways. Additional funds were provided for road construction although these, too, served a dual military purpose. The Reinhardt programme was extended into future years and totalled 5 billion Reichsmarks between 1932 and 1935. This amounted to only a little over 1% of GNP but the propaganda campaign to both a home and international audience had two objectives: to highlight attention to the Nazis' proactive work creation schemes; and to cast a veil over rearmament, the real focus of the Nazis' expansionary spending. The rearmament programme, first agreed in June 1933, dwarfed the work creation schemes: 35 billion Reichsmarks over eight years, an incredible 4.4 billion Reichsmarks per year which, of course, had enormous positive consequences for German economic growth and, as a consequence, employment. In a direct but secret violation of Versailles, the Nazis planned an air force of two thousand aircraft by 1935, the army was to expand from 100,000 to 300,000 by the end of 1937, and the navy – admittedly with a much longer time horizon – planned to increase the number of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers allowed under treaty, and also to build three aircraft carriers and seventy-two submarines, both of which had been banned under Versailles.[97]

If the ILO was impressed by Nazi Germany's apparent success in dealing with unemployment, it failed to show its admiration. The regime's rhetoric, violence, and no doubt its politics prevented the ILO from seeing Germany as an economic prototype. Dissenting voices who left Germany confirmed the presence of dubious practices. The academic Leo Grebler migrated from Germany to the USA in 1937 finding employment in various federal agencies before becoming a professor of urban land economics at Columbia and then the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1937, Grebler published articles in the *ILR* detailing the true extent of Nazi Germany's work creation schemes which on paper looked impressive. He revealed the ways in

[97] Wulff, 'The Third Reich', pp. 283-4; James, 'Innovation and conservatism', p. 73; Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, pp. 44-9, 53-9.

which the regime withdrew people from the labour force through the marriage laws, the Labour Service, as 'agricultural assistants', and the increase in the armed forces. He also asserted the importance of rearmament to the economy and how early the programmes had begun. Since late 1934 the effects of rearmament had been 'noticeable' but from spring 1935, it 'dominated economic activity'.[98] In no way, he argued, was Germany to be seen as a 'test case' for public works policies.

The ILO's attention was drawn instead to proactive policy intervention in two other candidates: the USSR, and the USA. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal promised action to tackle unemployment and to stimulate economy activity, and he was true to his word. Amongst a series of other measures, the longstanding problems of agriculture – which still employed 30% of workers in the USA – were addressed through production controls and financial support of up to $2 billion of bonds to help to refinance farm mortgages.[99] In addition, the National Industrial Recovery Act granted $3.3 billion to the Public Works Administrator over two years. The historiography of the New Deal has, as with the Nazis, been less kind. Much of this criticism has been ideological and politicized with some claiming that it was not radical enough whilst others complained that it was socialism. It has also been censured for its economic impact and its cost.[100] In fact, Roosevelt faced much contemporary criticism, too, having to contend with conflicting opinions within his administration as well as 'orthodox' economists, and national and state politicians. The reactions highlight how people at the time believed that the New Deal was indeed transformative.

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[98] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, L. Grebler, 'Work Creation Policy in Germany, 1932-35: I', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Mar. 1937), pp. 329-51, pp. 335, 350; L. Grebler, 'Work Creation Policy in Germany, 1932-35: II', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Apr. 1937), pp. 505-27.
[99] A. Badger, *The New Deal: The Depression Years, 1933-40* (Basingstoke, 1989), pp. 147-89.
[100] See, for example, E. Robinson, *The Roosevelt Leadership, 1933-1945* (Philadelphia, 1955), H. Zinn, *New Deal Thought* (Indianapolis, 1966), and P. Conkin, *The New Deal* (London, 1968).

The ILO enthusiastically supported the new developments under Roosevelt. In November 1933, the ILO published a volume detailing the legislative measures introduced by the Roosevelt administration to confront unemployment and to bring about economic recovery.[101] The next month the ILO published an abridged version in an opinion article in the *ILR*. It expounded the 'remarkable' experiment in the USA where, 'it may safely be said that never have such fundamental economic changes been attempted unaccompanied by any correspondingly fundamental political change'. Noting that it was, of course, too early to talk about overcoming the Depression, it nonetheless looked to immediate increases in employment as a measure of its early success.[102] Keynes publicly backed Roosevelt's policies penning an 'Open Letter to the President' in the *New York Times* in December 1933. Keynes also met Roosevelt briefly during a trip to the USA in 1934 in an attempt to persuade him of the virtues of a large-scale public works programme funded by government borrowing. Ultimately, though, Roosevelt was a fiscal conservative who wanted 'normal' government expenditure to be balanced and sold the budget deficits to his critics as temporary but necessary emergency measures. When recovery looked to be gaining momentum in early 1937 Roosevelt was persuaded to side with the fiscal hawks to cut government spending but it sent the economy swiftly back into a deep depression. Only through a new $3.75 billion spending package, directed mainly towards rearmament, was the economy able to recover in 1939.[103]

An interesting example of the two-way process in which the ILO and national governments worked together to promote their common agendas was how the ILO provided a platform for the

[101] ILOA, International Labour Office, *National Recovery Measures in the United States*, Studies and Reports, Series B (Economic Conditions), No. 19, (Geneva, 1933).
[102] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, 'The Economic Experiment in the United States', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 28, No. 6 (Dec. 1933), pp. 759-73, p. 759, 773.
[103] W. Barber, *Designs within Disorder: Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Economists, and the Shaping of American Economic Policy, 1933-1945* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 29-32, 36-42, 49-52, 83-9; Badger, *The New Deal*, pp. 74, 109-14.

Roosevelt administration to promote the cause of public works through the *ILR*. In 1936, Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Department of the Interior and the Public Works Administrator (the individual in control of Roosevelt's $3.3 billion spending programme), published an article concerning the activities and achievements of public works under the National Industrial Recovery Act.[104] Offering a stark contrast to the millions of unemployed, the breadlines, the abandoned mines, and the closed factories, he stated that the aim of the PWA had been to stimulate a general economic recovery as well as create employment through 'vast expenditure'. 1934 saw a massive 52% increase in public construction over the previous year and in total it was estimated that 532 million hours of direct employment had been created up to February 1937. Ickes was also quick to outline the multiplier effect on employment and general expenditure in the economy. The PWA funds were spent on transport infrastructure, flood defences, school and hospital buildings, sewage disposal and treatment plants, rubbish disposal, water supply, and recreational facilities such as community halls, parks, and swimming pools. The success, he outlined, could be measured not only in terms of the employment opportunities and the valuable and permanent improvements to national infrastructure, but that the administration had decided to hold public works in 'reserve'.[105]

Another fascinating development was the ILO's interest in developments in the USSR. In the 1930s, numerous articles appeared in the *ILR* on subjects as diverse as social insurance, female employment, the Stakhanov movement, trade unionism, employment exchanges, and collectivization.[106] The information emerging from the Soviet authorities was, we now know,

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[104] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, H. Ickes, 'Public Works in the United States of America', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 35, No. 6 (June 1937), pp. 775-802.

[105] Ickes, 'Public Works', pp. 775-93.

[106] See Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, 'The Working of Social Insurance in the USSR.', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Oct. 1933), pp. 539-48; International Labour Office, 'The Reorganization of Social Insurance Institutions in the USSR', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Mar. 1935), pp. 364-82; A. Abramson, 'Social Insurance in the USSR, 1933-1937', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Aug.1938), pp. 226-42; International Labour Office, 'The Progress of Women's Employment in the USSR', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Feb.1935), pp. 231-7; B. Markus, 'The Stakhanov Movement and the

dubious and incomplete but the ILO was granted access – at least partially – and evidently believed that they were able to make objective assessments on the regime. One particular area of interest was the USSR's success in dealing with unemployment and the new directions in economic policy. In 1936, Lewis Lorwin, an American economist who joined the ILO in 1935 after a career in academia, including 10 years at the Brookings Institute in Washington, co-authored an article with Alexander Abramson, a Lithuanian member of the ILO, detailing their experiences of a mission to the USSR in late 1935. Their description was almost wholly positive. It spoke of 'great strides forward', a country 'almost unrecognizable', and a 'profound contrast' from just a few years previously. Substantial improvements in living conditions were perceptible with food supplies increasing, which in turn had helped to raise nutritional standards especially through work canteens, as well as better housing and clothing provision. Agricultural and industrial developments were described as 'revolutionary' with 'substantial evidences of industrial progress' and the 'most modern methods of factory construction'. The Soviet Union was 'in the way of solving the essential problems of industrialization under a system of collective ownership and Government operation'. Not only had rapid industrialization led to a shortage of labour but productivity had increased too. The authors put this down to rationalization, piece work, technical training, promotion prospects, bonuses, and the collectivist method which provided workers with a sense of ownership in their factory.[107] The contrast with the rest of the world was stark.

That the USSR allowed an ILO mission to visit was in all likelihood part of the Soviet authorities' broader Popular Front campaign against fascism. The engagement allowed Soviet

Increased Productivity of Labour in the USSR', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (July 1936), pp. 5-33; International Labour Office, 'The Recent Evolution of Trade Unionism in the USSR', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Feb. 1934), pp. 206-22; International Labour Office, 'Collectivization of Agriculture in the USSR', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Sep. 1932), pp. 386-409.

[107] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, L. Lorwin and A. Abramson, 'The Present Phase of Economic and Social Development in the USSR', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Jan. 1936), pp. 5-40, pp. 5-8, 23, 26-8, 34-7

experts to become involved in the activities of the League and ILO by sitting on expert committees. The *ILR* in turn allowed the Soviet authorities to propagandize the regime's accomplishments. In March 1936, Professor Boris Markus, Chief of the Labour and Employment Section, State Planning Commission in Moscow, authored an article which sought to explain how the USSR had not only 'completely abolished' unemployment but that its 'root cause had been completely extirpated'. State officials, he stated, had recognized that unemployment had not been completely eradicated during the 1920s due to 'overpopulation of the land' and the continued prevalence of a poorer class of peasants. Thus, the first Five-Year Plan was conceived aimed at 'coordinated measures for industrial expansion and rural reconstruction'. The success of this joint strategy had caused unemployment to 'disappear' as rapid industrialization led to an increased demand for labour – so much so that employment exchanges had been closed – and the 'abolition of the kulak class' had redistributed wealth and resources more broadly amongst the farming community. Thus, it was the 'abolition of social differences' and the end of rural poverty that had brought the rural-urban exodus to an end and which had eliminated unemployment. Markus's article admitted that new issues had emerged that required attention such as the training, recruitment, and efficient organization of its labour force but these were being dealt with in turn in a planned and systematic manner.[108]

The EFO, 1934-9: Towards a new approach and collaboration with the ILO

The failure to make any headway at the World Economic Conference, with the ever-increasing retreat into economic nationalism, pushed the idea of international public works into the background. Unemployment remained high, however, even in those countries that had left the

[108] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, B. Markus, 'The Abolition of Unemployment in the USSR', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Mar. 1936), pp. 356-90, pp. 356, 374-5, 379-82, 385-90.

gold standard and had experienced some measure of economic recovery. At the beginning of 1935 unemployment in Britain and Sweden was hovering around 15% whilst in the USA it had only just dipped below 20%. The ILO therefore continued its studies with some vigour but its reaction to the political and economic currents was to shift the emphasis from pushing an international agenda back to emphasizing the national. The League's 76th Council Session in September 1933 did suggest that 'a continuous international study' would be of value but it also indicated that governments could carry out public works 'along parallel lines'.[109] The ensuing enquiry, drawn up jointly by the CTO and the ILO, followed the Assembly's latter instructions and focused on national public works policies, which the ILO published in 1935 as *Public Works Policy*.[110] The study was able to draw on a broad milieu of ideas and practices from Britain, France, Germany, Sweden, and the USSR. Once again, the ILO stressed the importance of how a public works policy was able to provide 'a fresh supply of purchasing power' during a depression, one that was 'rapid and appreciable' thus enabling 'the authorities to exercise an effective influence on economic activity' during an economic contraction. This would help to compensate for a decline in demand. Furthermore, public works should aim to create as much employment as possible. They were good for workers because they paid high wages and they were good for the wider economy because of the subsidiary effects; approximately 80% of wages, it said, were spent on consumer goods.[111]

In October 1935, an Assembly resolution asked to take this study further and tasked the CTO with a 'detailed' study of national public works. A meeting of experts followed in June 1936 whose subsequent report examined administrative issues and financing methods. Thomas and the

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[109] LONA, D.D.E./2, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Activities of the CTO and of the ILO in connection with public works, 8 Apr. 1938.
[110] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Public Works Policy*, Studies and Reports, Series C (Employment and Unemployment), No. 19 (Geneva, 1935).
[111] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Public Works Policy*, pp. 5-6, 60, 155, 158.

ILO's prescience from late 1930 was not cited but evident. It described how 'the majority of governments clearly recognized the influence which the execution of important public works might have on economic recovery in their countries and on unemployment' and although public works on their own were insufficient to 'remedy unemployment and overcome the depression' governments should plan works in advance.[112]

Meanwhile, the ILO remained abreast of developments in economic policy, particularly those areas that it deemed to be supportive of their own ideas and agenda. The theoretical effect of the multiplier, for instance, was reviewed in an article by M. Mitnitzky in 1934 which looked at Kahn's work from 1931. Making use of the German Statistical Office's calculations Mitnitzky calculated that the effect of primary to secondary employment was about 1.4, somewhat lower than Kahn's original presumption. But, Mitnitzky was quick to assert that although this result might have been considered disappointing it should not prevent public works being used as a policy to create employment in a depression. The whole premise of public works was to make up for the shortfall in expenditure and activity of private enterprise. Hence, the stress on public works to be 'supplementary expenditure' above ordinary government expenditure otherwise it would simply be replacing rather than creating new demand. Moreover, there was no reason to believe that private initiatives to stimulate employment would be more successful than the state. He also suggested that since workers consumed most or all of their income the best public works were those that were wage intensive.[113]

Whilst the ILO continued to press for public works to be implemented in the mid-1930s, the EFO had, by 1934, begun to embark on a new journey, both intellectually and in terms of

[112] LONA, D.D.E./2, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Activities of the CTO and of the ILO in connection with public works, 8 Apr. 1938.

[113] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, M. Mitnitzky, 'The Effects of a Public Works Policy on Business Activity and Employment', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Oct. 1934), pp. 435-56.

outlook; on the latter, it too became concerned about 'practical action'.[114] Having not even thought that it was worthwhile to investigate the causes of the Depression in 1931, let alone suggest action to combat it, by the mid-1930s Loveday was at the forefront of the EFO's enquiries into business cycles, which at their core aimed to prevent or to mitigate depressions, and other investigations related to the effects of unemployment. The EFO, of course, followed the directions of the Assembly and Council but just as there were radical, national political and economic responses to the Depression, the EFO responded too and, moreover, it looked to shape the debate. During 1932 and 1933 the EFO had been consumed by preparations for the Lausanne Conference (1932) and the World Monetary and Economic Conference (1933) but the depth and persistence of the Depression forced a re-evaluation of its approach and a major shift in thinking. It realized that states were not listening to its pronouncements on protectionism and international cooperation and the EFO also abandoned its belief in classical economic liberalism. Cracks had already appeared as early as 1929 when the Gold Delegation convened (which sat between 1929 and 1932) as the EFO privately concurred with the views of British officialdom that the gold standard was behaving imperfectly or, rather, that some of the main players at the gold standard table were.[115] The EFO also recognized that agriculture, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, required outside intervention. But the broader effects of the Depression, particularly the massive and enduring unemployment and its political repercussions, eventually caused the EFO to advocate a more mixed approach to economic policy and to unemployment, which included state involvement.

Loveday was not merely supportive of the EFO's efforts to investigate the prevention of depressions, but was actively involved in ensuring that the EFO's various enquiries continued to

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[114] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 162-5.
[115] See pp. 64 n52. Also, Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 51-71, 203; Clavin and Wessels, 'Another Golden Idol?', pp. 765-95; Eichengreen, pp. 391-3.

receive widespread support. He lobbied government ministers and officials, both within and beyond the corridors of the League, and he sought external funding to ensure their continuation. The Rockefeller Foundation developed a major interest in identifying the causes of the Great Depression and emerged as one of the EFO's – and the League's – key relationships, awarding $125,000 for Gottfried von Haberler's study and much else besides (it contributed $2 million to the construction of the League of Nations library, for instance).[116] Despite the size of the grant, it would be unwise to overstate Rockefeller's influence over the League's agenda, however, as the sum provided to the EFO was only one of many endowments that the Foundation granted in the period. Multiple European (and American) academic institutions, including the London School of Economics, the Institute of Social Science at the University of Stockholm, and the Institute of Economics and History at the University of Copenhagen, received similar benefactions.[117]

The shift in Loveday's views is evidenced through his desire, along with Frank L. McDougall, an economic advisor to the Australian government based in London, to see the League broaden its enquiries into depressions and other related subjects. In October 1937, the 18th Assembly passed an extensive resolution instructing the EFO to study, in Loveday's words:

> '…(a) raising standards of living (b) preventing or mitigating economic depression (c) agricultural credits (d) existing economic and financial tendencies which should be taken into account by states in determining their monetary policies...This is a terrific programme and I suppose McDougall and I were responsible. In a way it is the mature bloom of all the building up of the Intelligence Service.'[118]

Regardless of whether Loveday overstated his contribution to the League's resolution, this cannot detract from the importance that Loveday attached to the programme. It shows how many of the

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[116] Bodleian Law Library, Oxford, O.LN per.1, League of Nations, Offer by the Rockefeller Foundation for the Promotion of the Analytical Research Work of the Financial Section and Economic Intelligence Service, Note by the Secretary-General of the League Submitted to the Council, 22 May 1933, *League of Nations Official Journal* (July 1933), p. 853, Annex 1438; Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, p. 74.
[117] E. Craver, 'Patronage and the directions of research in economics: The Rockefeller foundation in Europe, 1924–1938', *Minerva*, Vol. 24, Nos. 2-3 (1986), pp. 205-222, pp. 208-13.
[118] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, MSS 31/1, 1937.

problems that had been highlighted by the Depression – standards of living, agriculture, economic depressions – had become interconnected, a 'programme' as Loveday described it. The resolution also highlights another fundamental shift: to the individual. Whereas orthodox economic liberalism was concerned with producers in the abstract and the banking system in general, attention switched towards the needs and desires of people.

The first enquiry undertaken by the EFO on its new path was Haberler's research on business cycles, begun in 1934 and published in 1937 as *Prosperity and Depression: A Theoretical Analysis of Cyclical Movements*.[119] As the title implied, it was an academic exercise, although Loveday's statement in the preface that the 'ultimate object' of the study was 'to find ways and means to avert depressions, or if they are in fact inevitable, to render the structure of society more apt to meet the shock which they cause', resonated with the ILO's more practical outlook.[120] As with Ohlin's enquiry into the causes of the Great Depression, this was not a study into unemployment although it did discuss aggregate demand, underconsumption, unemployment, and remedies for unemployment. In addition, a revised edition contained an extensive evaluation (virtually an entire chapter of 87 pages) of Keynes's *General Theory*.[121] The chapter was possibly a response to the criticisms made, for example, by Richard Kahn that Haberler's first edition had not given due consideration either to Keynes or to Kahn's multiplier.

Haberler engaged in correspondence with a who's who of academics including Thomas Balogh, Ragnar Frisch, Alvin Hansen, Roy Harrod, Ralph Hawtrey, Frederick Hayek, Per Jacobsson, Richard Kahn, Erik Lindahl, Oskar Morgenstern, Gunnar Myrdal, Bertil Ohlin, Lionel Robbins, Dennis Robertson, and Joseph Schumpeter. In consideration of aggregate demand

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[119] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 53, Haberler, *Prosperity and Depression*. Haberler's theories were then tested in a study published in 1938 by J. Tinbergen, *Statistical Testing of Business Cycle Theories*.
[120] Haberler, *Prosperity and Depression*, p. 6.
[121] Haberler, *Prosperity and Depression*, pp. 168-254.

Haberler described the impact of government responses through increased expenditure either by public works schemes or ordinary expenditure as 'important influences' on consumer spending and ways to increase total demand. On unemployment, Haberler declared that a crucial finding was that deflationary shocks became serious 'long before full employment' had been reached. The reason, he believed, was that an increase in demand for goods did not automatically lead to a proportional increase in output and employment; unemployed workers were not a 'homogenous reserve army from which each industry can draw the men needed with required qualities'. Moreover, the statement that 'thanks to Keynes, there is almost general agreement that Government spending...will stimulate employment' was an endorsement of the most recent developments in macroeconomics.[122] The most surprising aspect perhaps was that Haberler made no reference to the Stockholm School despite Ohlin's close links with the EFO and that Haberler corresponded regularly with its leading proponents.

Haberler also discussed underconsumption. He stated that an 'increase in consumer demand is an indispensable link in the cumulative process of expansion', but he went further by adding that he saw no reason why increased consumer demand could not be the stimulus that initiated a revival. This could be induced by spending savings ('dishoarding') but a 'much more important influence – not so much for the past as for the present and the future – is the increase in consumers' spending *deliberately induced by Government action*' (my emphasis). This could be achieved through public works, increases in ordinary expenditure, or tax cuts, but it must be financed to stimulate new demand without diverting it from other sources. Haberler included important caveats, however. The possibility existed that the stimulus could be executed by simply

[122] Haberler, *Prosperity and Depression*, pp. 236, 359, 384. Endres and Fleming overlooked Haberler's appraisal of Keynes, *General Theory* as they reviewed the first edition of Haberler's publication, which was printed in 1937, rather than a later version.

turning on the printing press creating (hyper) inflation, and he admitted that the countries that had suffered severe inflationary problems in the 1920s would no doubt be hesitant to consider this policy. There was also the problem that only a select few countries were able to borrow the huge sums necessary to make these potential stimulus policies worthwhile without curtailing private investment. Moreover, tax cuts, which Haberler thought might be as effective as government spending anyway, would appeal to many people over public works as they were 'not a permanent extension of government activities'.[123]

The EFO's studies on depressions continued after Haberler's work was published, although in another vein as the Delegation on Economic Depressions, which sat between 1938 and 1945. Its objective was once again to examine 'measures which might be employed...to the prevention or mitigation of economic depression'.[124] During the war its attention turned to postwar issues but there were six meetings during 1938-39 that are of relevance here.[125] The League's Council decided that the Depression Delegation should comprise members of the EFO's Financial and Economic Committees, outside experts, and, as a sign of the general rapprochement between the ILO and EFO, an ILO representative. With Frederick Phillips, a deputy permanent secretary to the British Treasury and chairman of the Financial Committee, chairing the Delegation the expectation would have been for the commitment to economic orthodoxy to remain steadfast, but if the revolution in economic thought had not yet taken hold in the British Treasury it was nonetheless less inclined to dismiss it outright. The other Economic and Financial Committee members were: Winfield Riefler, an American, head of the Economics Department at the Institute for Advanced

[123] Haberler, *Prosperity and Depression*, pp. 384-5.
[124] LONA, R 4453/10A/32649/32649, Economic Booms and Depressions, Work of the Financial Committee, Report to the Council of the Work of the 65th Session of the Committee, 4 Dec. 1937, p. 4.
[125] It published two volumes during the Second World War: League of Nations, *The Transition from War to Peace* (Geneva, 1943) and League of Nations, *Economic Stability in the Post-War World: The Conditions of Prosperity after the Transition from War to Peace* (Geneva, 1945).

Studies at Princeton University; Rosti Ryti, the chairman of the Bank of Finland (and future Prime Minister and President of Finland); and McDougall. Butler represented the ILO in the first meeting and Percival Martin at the second. The outside experts included Haberler, who attended the first meeting to discuss his business cycle research, Bertil Ohlin, Oskar Morgenstern, Director of the Austrian *Konjunktur* Institute, and Jacques Rueff, Director of the *Mouvement des Fonds* at the Ministry of Finance, Paris.

The Depression Delegation considered both business cycle theories and the practical efforts undertaken by governments to address the depression conditions during the 1930s. Interestingly, the secretariat, in a paper prepared for the first meeting, noted a change of attitude by governments in their responses to the EFO's circular letter concerning the Depression Delegation's focus of study. The most revealing feature, it stated, was that governments 'now acknowledged their obligation to maintain economic activity and employment and have shown particular interest in trying to render the whole economic machine more depression-worthy'.[126] The tone of the EFO's note suggested that it, too, favoured this new approach which offered a remarkable contrast to the resistance shown by Leith-Ross, Loveday, and the EFO throughout 1930-33 to even consider counter-cyclical measures. Chapters four and five reveal how these views were translated into policy responses in other areas of social and economic development. Proposals included the building of public housing, for instance, as part of a public works policy and, in agriculture, a shift from cereal production to other foodstuffs to improve nutrition as well as being a means of economic development to help poorer agricultural areas.

The Depression Delegation's deliberations revealed numerous bold assertions and further recognition of the macroeconomic revolution that had occurred by the late 1930s. Two are of

[126] LONA, D.D.E./49, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Basis of Discussion for Report, Part A, 9 June 1939.

special interest here: fiscal policy and public works. Planning was another key theme. In a discussion on recovery policies the Depression Delegation concluded that governments should utilize counter-cyclical measures through fiscal policy, expenditure which could be achieved through ordinary public expenditure or additional public expenditure. Ordinary public expenditure through the normal public construction of infrastructure – roads, bridges, schools etc.– could, with planning, help to counter booms and depressions. Conscious that not all such projects could be postponed until a depression occurred, the Delegation nonetheless reiterated that it was 'strongly of the opinion' that public works should be planned many years ahead since the poor timing of such projects tended to accentuate a boom or bust. Construction during depression conditions could even save money since prices and hence costs should be lower at that time. If works were executed during times of depression the payment of wages to workers rather than unemployment insurance offered two further advantages: it reduced expenditure on payments to the unemployed; and it led to an increase in net income as a result of wages being higher than the level of insurance paid. It thus contributed to higher demand although it was, of course, true that unemployment insurance ensured that the unemployed at least enjoyed some disposable income.[127]

The argument in favour of additional public expenditure was that under certain conditions ordinary expenditure, even when backed up with accommodative banking policies i.e. low interest rates, may be insufficient to 'have enough effect on the total monetary demand' to revive the economy. On these occasions, it was 'necessary to consider the undertaking of additional capital expenditure, covered by borrowing, over and above the ordinary programme'. Whilst the hope was always to stimulate economic revival by ordinary means, the Depression Delegation affirmed that

[127] LONA, D.D.E./43, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Synthesis of Discussion at First Session on Recovery Policy, 30 Nov. 1938; D.D.E./50, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Basis of Discussion for Report, Part B, Policies Directed toward Achieving Greater Stability in Total Demand, 22 June 1939.

in a severe depression that could not always be achieved, as the 1930s had demonstrated. The business community, it believed, must be made to realize that there were 'valid economic reasons' why a government should borrow to finance public works when private demand fell, and it was important that public opinion was educated in the reasons behind such a policy. Swedish practice during the Depression offered a good example of how that could be achieved without upsetting business confidence. It had borrowed and spent 350 million crowns more than its income between 1931-2 and 1934-5.[128]

Some members of the Delegation, staying true to their conservative leanings, evinced a more cautious tone. Haberler declared that public works must be an investment rather than simply funding consumption expenditure which could lead to 'useless' public works activities such as the digging of holes. Moreover, he warned of the potential 'inflationary' consequences of state borrowing. Phillips, too, stated that policymakers had to be conscious that state borrowing did not crowd out private enterprise, but he also made a important acknowledgment that showed that the macroeconomic revolution had begun to permeate the British Treasury; state borrowing, he said, could stimulate investment that would otherwise have been idle.[129] The dissenting voices accepted an early draft of a report that stated that expenditure should be a 'supplement' to private investment and not a 'displacement' of it, which must therefore be financed through borrowing rather than taxation because taxation could just divert funds from the private to the public sector. Since the money was to be borrowed other banking policies must be applied to ensure that interest rates did not rise and the combination should aim to have 'the maximum expansionary effect'.[130] Regarding

[128] LONA, D.D.E./43, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Synthesis of Discussion at First Session on Recovery Policy, 30 Nov. 1938; D.D.E./50, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Basis of Discussion for Report, Part B, Policies Directed toward Achieving Greater Stability in Total Demand, 22 June 1939.
[129] LONA, R 4453/10A/36595/32649, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Minutes of First Session, 30 June 1938.
[130] LONA, D.D.E./43, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Synthesis of Discussion at First Session on Recovery Policy, 30 Nov. 1938; D.D.E./50, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Basis of Discussion for Report, Part B, Policies Directed toward Achieving Greater Stability in Total Demand, 22 June 1939.

taxation, the Delegation agreed that public works in a growing economy should be funded from taxation to distinguish it from public works in a depression, which should be funded through borrowing. It also expressed a preference to balance the government's budget in a multi-year cycle. This worked both ways, however, so that whilst states should run budget deficits during a depression to counteract the decline in income from the private sector, a state should also repay the debts it had built up in bad years during times of economic prosperity.

Despite the advantages to be gained from public expenditure on public works schemes the Depression Delegation acknowledged that each situation was different and dependent on the circumstances at that time. Public works might not be the best option if, for example, a country had balance of payments problems, a burden of debt, a lack of monetary reserves, or a lack of confidence in its government's economic policy. Overall, the 'level of confidence of the business community' was critical. Furthermore, it was important to be aware of the condition of the labour market; the measures proposed by the Delegation were devised to help overcome cyclical not structural unemployment. In the case of structural unemployment, it would be 'dangerous to impede the necessary transference of labour' to other areas or industries.[131]

Public works were also to be directed towards the skills or work that the unemployed were trained for. The New Deal in the USA offered a good example in this regard; public works schemes did not always have to be road-building although that worked well for 'undeveloped' countries.[132] Ohlin believed that works should be directed to the reduction of unemployment and hence aimed at those areas suffering the most. For this reason, he preferred a programme of public works over

[131] LONA, D.D.E./43, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Synthesis of Discussion at First Session on Recovery Policy, 30 Nov. 1938; D.D.E./49, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Basis of Discussion for Report, Part A, 9 June 1939.
[132] LONA, D.D.E./43, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Synthesis of Discussion at First Session on Recovery Policy, 30 Nov. 1938; D.D.E./50, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Basis of Discussion for Report, Part B, Policies Directed toward Achieving Greater Stability in Total Demand, 22 June 1939.

an ordinary budget deficit (through tax remissions) as it ‘gave concentrated effects at the points where they were most needed’ whereas tax cuts were ‘less discriminate’. When questioned by Loveday as to whether it was a social or a depression policy, Ohlin stated that it was both and acknowledged that whilst production would probably increase more if the creation of new demand was directed to new areas and industries he preferred that public works were directed towards depressed regions. Ohlin did stress, though, that he thought that public works should only form one part of economic policy and the ‘additional expenditure should act as a lever for private investment not a substitute for it’. Public works should never ‘loom so large’ as to have too great an impact on state finances and they should be ‘manageable’; that is, they should be increased or decreased a little as required. Moreover, he believed that the multiplier was a distraction. Its contribution to consumption, he felt, was never ‘constant’ and he regarded the most important aspect of public works to be its impact on the volume of investment and not the secondary effects on consumption.

Riefler thought that the specific type and the scale of the chosen works were crucial. They could open up new areas for development, ‘accelerate trade or...induce additional private outlay’. The Panama Canal offered the perfect example. Its construction led to ‘new communication, new industries, and new cities’, but a second canal would be a duplication and have limited effects. Loveday was less convinced of the ‘accelerating’ effect described by Riefler as he thought that public works had more of a long-term than a cyclical impact in which case the only positive was the investment in the works themselves. In contrast to Ohlin, Loveday also stated his preference for an ordinary budget deficit through lower taxes rather than public works since he preferred less state interference in the economy. Louis Rasminsky, however, who was a member of the EFO’s

secretariat, openly disagreed with his Director during this discussion by stating his preference for additional public works.[133]

On a broader basis, the Delegation made an understated but critical observation that neatly synthesized the EFO and ILO's studies on economic policy, housing, and nutrition undertaken since the onset of the Depression. Also serving as a counter to potential criticism that public works policies in certain countries were unnecessary and superfluous expenditure, the Delegation pronounced that in 'rich' countries 'where the stock of capital goods is very large' and where the propensity to save incomes was greater than to invest, the only way to prevent a 'semi-permanent slump' would be to either: maintain a higher level of public expenditure than income 'to mop up the excessive savings' with state spending on a 'continuous public works policy, subsidizing housing, or improving national nutrition'; or to 'reduce the volume of saving through the redistribution of income'. Redistribution, it stated, could be achieved through unemployment insurance, subsidies to private industry, or 'direct subsidization of consumption' e.g. with so-called 'protective' foods; that is, to meat, dairy, poultry, fruit, and vegetables.[134] In just a few sentences the Depression Delegation had succinctly summarized the contribution of the EFO and the ILO to the economic and social revolution of the 1930s.

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[133] LONA, R 4453/10A/36595/32649, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Minutes of First Session, 30 June 1938; D.D.E./43, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Synthesis of Discussion at First Session on Recovery Policy, 30 Nov. 1938.

[134] LONA, D.D.E./43, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Synthesis of Discussion at First Session on Recovery Policy, 30 Nov. 1938.

Chapter Three: Migration

This chapter, unlike the others, only looks at the ILO and its attempts to tackle the problem of large-scale unemployment through worker migration. This is because the EFO simply did not show any interest in the subject. The chapter firstly considers the national and international context and migrants' motivations before moving on to a discussion of the ILO's schemes during two distinct phases: the early 1930s and the late 1930s. It examines how the vastly different circumstances of the post-First World War world presented formidable difficulties – political, economic, and cultural – which prevented the ILO's schemes coming to fruition. Interestingly, it shows how the ILO (and the League), although proponents of liberal internationalism, tried to achieve migration through greater state intervention rather than relying on market forces. The ILO was always amenable to state involvement, of course, if it benefited the plight of the worker but the period after the Great War showed how much the world had changed, and how and why the challenges of unemployment posed new as well as familiar problems; after all, the nineteenth century response to unemployment was for the unemployed simply to move or they were encouraged to move. Above all, the chapter shows how the ILO faced a near impossible situation in the face of constant national opposition.

The end of open borders: the national context

In 1925, the ILO established a Permanent Migration Committee which was designed to coordinate efforts at protecting immigrants. The Australian press were always swift to pick up on any challenge to the 'White Australia' policy which was deemed to be interference in domestic affairs; it was, indeed, a key sovereignty issue (discussed in more detail below). *The Sydney Morning Herald*, amongst others, viewed the ILO's decision as a sinister move that could be used

to force Australia to accept immigrants, and asserted that the ILO or the League had no '*locus standi*' on the question of immigration as they could not compel a state to open its borders against its will. The ILO deemed that this was a 'mischievous' interpretation of its committee's remit and was sure that a delegate from the League or ILO had leaked the information to the Australian press, which only serves to highlight the intensity of feelings in Australia at the time.[1] Adelaide's *The Register* more explicitly played on the fear of the foreigner. It declared that 'almost every Australian proclaims the desirability of the "White Australia" ideal' and proceeded to warn of the threat to this principle and the necessity, perhaps, of having to become 'aggressors...to repel the invasion of importunate and indigent neighbours'.[2]

This context is critical to understanding the difficulties that confronted the ILO in its attempts to engage with national governments and encourage them to recommence international migration after the First World War. The war had shattered the more open, global environment which had existed during the nineteenth century and brought the issue of migration sharply into focus. Thereafter, it became a subject of fundamental national importance. This meant that the ILO was approaching migration in a newly and deeply segregated world that had enormous consequences for labour. During the First World War, governments had imposed drastic limitations on human mobility, a practice that was often reinforced with legislation and quotas after hostilities ended. The new regulations were about more than suspicions of enemies with guns, though; they built on perspectives of population that had been infused by aspects of race, 'quality', biology, and control which had manifested during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The development of the attitudes of 'white men's countries' – Britain, its white Dominions, and the USA – can be placed in a global context with three nineteenth century Oxford University

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[1] ILOA, E 113/0/4/0, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 June 1925.
[2] ILOA, E 113/0/4/0, *The Register*, 22 June 1925.

academics at the fore: Edward Augustus Freeman, an Anglo-Saxon historian; Goldwin Smith, the Regius Chair of History; and James Bryce, Regius Professor of Civil Law. Freeman and Smith believed that concepts of racial superiority explained the course of history, notably Teutonic prowess, and Anglo-Saxon 'genius' and 'destiny' to rule. Bryce, tutored by Freeman at Oxford, evidently agreed. Like the others he was a liberal, radical, and dissenter and expressed great interest and support for the democracy practised in the USA. In 1888, Bryce published *American Commonwealth* in which he allied the idea of Anglo-Saxon superiority with the 'science' that had emerged to prove that races were at different stages of evolution. Moreover, he claimed that the Radical Reconstruction in the USA after its civil war had been a failure which proved that 'multiracial democracy' was impossible. The book was received to great acclaim and appropriated by 'white nation-builders' in Australia, South Africa, and the USA which propelled him as a world authority on race relations.[3]

The global movement of 'white men's countries' was identified in an article 'The Souls of White Folk' published in 1910 by W.E. DuBois, the historian, sociologist, and activist, who recognized 'a new, modern "whiteness"...sweeping the world'.[4] It found expression against Asian countries through the commonplace terminology of 'race suicide, pandemics, and the "yellow peril"' and 'inspired the first concerted effort to regulate migration worldwide' by attempting to restrict Asians to Asia.[5] New Zealand passed legislation in 1881, 1888, and 1896 aimed at limiting

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[3] M. Lake and H. Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 50-3, 69, 73, 6, 68.
[4] Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, pp. 1-2.
[5] M. Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, MA & London, 2008), p. 7.

the number of Chinese immigrants[6] and the USA similarly passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.[7]

The effect of a 'white' immigration policy in North America and the British Dominions was remarkable. The USA, by far the most popular destination for migrants from Europe during the previous hundred years, introduced the Immigration Act of 1924 – replacing the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 – the enactment of which was a coordinated immigration policy designed primarily to ensure the perceived homogeneity of American culture, one strongly determined by race. It restricted the number of immigrants from any country to 2% of the number of people who were already living in the USA in 1890; the year was carefully selected as immigration from southern and eastern Europe had increased considerably in the period between 1890 and the First World War.[8] It was immigration 'increasingly imagined as Jewish', whilst also aiming to exclude new migrants from Spain and Italy.[9] The Asian Exclusion Act, which formed part of the broader Immigration Act of 1924, was even more draconian than the earlier Chinese Exclusion Act prohibiting any further immigration from Asia. The effects of these restrictions were to reduce immigration to the USA from southern and eastern Europe from 2.5 million during 1910-19 to 1.533 million during 1920-9 and to 113,000 during 1930-9.[10]

The policies of the USA naturally encouraged migrants to seek alternative destinations. Argentina, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand all experienced higher immigration levels during the 1920s than the 1890s, but it was no migration 'boom'. In fact, immigration to the New World

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[6] Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line,* p. 315.
[7] N. Harris, *The New Untouchables: Immigration and the New World Order* (London and New York, 1995), p. 94.
[8] T. Hatton and J. Williamson, 'International Migration 1850-1939: An Economic Survey', in T. Hatton and J. Williamson (eds.) *Migration and the International Labour Market* (London, 1994), pp. 3-32, p. 28.
[9] Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line,* p. 312.
[10] H. Gemery, 'Immigrants and Emigrants: International migration and the United States labour market in the Great Depression', in T. Hatton and J. Williamson (eds.) *Migration and The International Labour Market* (London, 1994), pp. 175-99, p. 178.

failed by some margin to attain the peaks that had been seen during the period 1900-1913.[11] It was also true that whilst immigration restrictions were generally not quite as severe in the British Dominions as they were in the USA, attitudes to race were just as discriminatory and they wished to remain as 'white' as possible. Canada introduced a literacy test in 1919 and divided countries into 'preferred' (north and western Europe) and 'non-preferred' (the rest), which aimed at deterring immigrants from southern Europe, whilst the Restriction Act of 1923 gave the Minister of Immigration 'complete discretion' over applications.[12]

Nowhere was this a more sensitive issue than in Australia. The Australian authorities, reflecting public opinion, remained determined to maintain a 'White Australia' policy and imposed stringent restrictions that deterred certain migrants for race, cultural, or economic reasons. For example, it operated a tiered landing money requirement whereby British migrants only had to pay £3, but migrants arriving from southern Europe were forced to pay £50-£200. Migrants from Asia meanwhile found it almost impossible to gain entry.[13] As outlined above, the Australian press were quick to pick up on any challenge to the 'White Australia' policy.

But even as 'emigration'[14] countries began to accept the new reality of more stringent immigration regulations and quotas, there were attempts to bring both sides of the migration equation together. Soon after becoming Prime Minister Mussolini approached the American authorities and asked them to relax their immigration quotas. Having promised to reinvigorate the Italian economy he was nonetheless content to see the rural poor leave Italy at that time and he

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[11] Hatton and Williamson, 'International Migration', p. 28.

[12] Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, p. 317; Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, D. Christie Tait, 'Migration and Settlement in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (July 1936), pp. 34-65, p. 55.

[13] A.M. Taylor, 'Mass Migration to Distant Southern Shores: Argentina and Australia, 1870-1939', in T. Hatton and J. Williamson, *Migration and the International Labour Market* (London, 1994), pp. 91-115, pp. 92, 100.

[14] 'Emigration' and 'immigration' were the terms that were in common usage at the time and I have decided to deploy them here.

also recognized the importance of remittances from emigrants back to the Italian economy. The American authorities unsurprisingly refused his request so, in 1924, Mussolini attempted to by-pass the politics by convening a conference on 'technical' questions. It was designed to be a forum to exchange views which would lead to recommendations on 'juridical, administrative, social, health, and transport' issues.[15] All countries interested in migration were present according to a League of Nations observer.[16] But, despite the adoption of many of the conference's recommendations, when a second technical conference was held in Havana in 1928 the dynamics had shifted against migration yet further. As Louis Varlez, a former Chief of the ILO's Migration Service observed (he attended the Havana conference in an individual capacity), migration depended on the right to the freedom of movement and not technical questions of an administrative nature. Immigration policies since 1924 had become even more restrictive so migration had continued to decline and therein lay the problem. That many countries failed to send delegates or just sent observers to Havana was a reflection of the increasingly nationalistic and racial attitudes of those who considered migration to be a wholly domestic issue.[17]

Although the decline in intercontinental migration was marked, new migration patterns emerged. Intra-European movements from Belgium, Spain, and Switzerland to France, from Italy to Switzerland, and from Poland to Germany had formed over the longer term but new trends in the post-First World War period were also evident. Organized state- and business-run recruitment for a number of industries, including travel arrangements, allowed significant numbers of immigrants from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania to migrate to France,

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[15] P. Nazzaro, *Fascist and Anti-Fascist Propaganda in America: The Dispatches of Italian Ambassador Gelasio Caetani* (Youngstown, 2008), pp. 20, 24.
[16] LONA, R 3572/50/7496/3670, (League of Nations) Report on the International Conference on Emigration and Immigration, Havana 1928, 1 Oct. 1928.
[17] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, L. Varlez, 'Migration Problems and the Havana Conference of 1928', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Jan. 1929), pp. 1-19, pp. 2-6.

Poles to Denmark, and Austrians and Czechoslovakians to Germany.[18] In France, demographic factors were critical as deaths and injuries from the First World War combined with its historical low birth rate caused paranoia when it looked across the border to its far more populous neighbour. Although the French authorities still wanted to control the flow of migrants by only issuing work permits in those industries which experienced zero unemployment, it nonetheless accepted cheap agricultural labour and was also the destination of approximately 500,000 Spanish refugees after Franco's decisive victory in 1939.[19]

There were, of course, even more overtly racial policies displayed by the states that demanded 'living space' in the 1930s: Germany, Italy, and Japan. Paul-André Rosental recently argued that the ILO's challenge to national sovereignty and its 'politicization' of and promotion of migration to ease population tensions inadvertently legitimized territorial expansion by the Axis powers.[20] As was the case for virtually all states, Germany, Italy, and Japan linked migration inextricably with the primacy of state or imperial sovereignty and those that suggested opening up migration to international scrutiny posed a direct challenge to state authority and state security. But this judgement, which will be examined in greater detail below, seems excessively damning on the ILO as the Germany, Italy, and Japan of the mid-1930s largely ignored the ILO (and League) anyway.

The racial element of migration was played out for all to see during the international refugee crises of the 1930s. The persecution of the Jewish population in Nazi Germany and

[18] P. Sicsic, 'Foreign Immigration and the French Labour Force, 1896-1926', in T. Hatton and J. Williamson, *Migration and The International Labour Market* (London, 1994), pp. 119-38, pp. 136-7; LONA, R2856, 10D/12378/12378, International Labour Office, Proposals of the International Labour Office for practical action in connection with unemployment (for submission to the CEEU), Apr. 1931.
[19] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, G. Mauco, 'Alien Workers in France', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Feb. 1936), pp. 185-93, p. 190.
[20] Paul-Andre Rosental, 'Géopolitique et Etat-providence. Le BIT et la politique mondiale des migrations dans l'entre-deux-guerres', *Annales*, 61, No. 1 (2006), pp. 99–134, pp. 131-4.

especially those policies designed to persuade Jews to emigrate saw Palestine's population increase from 60,000 at the end of the First World War to 370,000 by 1936.[21] But Arab opposition and the violent unrest that erupted in Palestine after 1936 compelled the British mandated authorities to impose more severe immigration restrictions. The rest of the world had been content to see large-scale Jewish emigration to Palestine as the solution to a 'German' problem, but as Palestine's borders were tightened after 1936 the refugee crisis became international. German Jews were by then competing with Eastern European Jews since they, too, were suffering persecution. The Polish government's threat in March 1938 to render 17,000 Polish Jews living in Germany as stateless was but one example. The Evian Conference held during the summer of 1938 was designed to help Jewish refugees but the lack of agreement only served to expose the prevailing attitudes in the rest of the world. Of course, it should not be forgotten that some German Jews, and others in Europe, having assimilated and acculturated, often over generations, simply did not want to leave.[22] The refugee crisis of the mid to late 1930s, created by Nazi Germany's persecution of its Jewish population, was compounded by the civil war in Spain. Options for would-be migrants escaping the conflict were equally limited. The USA was virtually closed off, of course, so small numbers, mainly children, were evacuated to a number of European countries, including the USSR. As well as military support for the Republican cause Stalin decreed that the USSR should accept refugee children – an estimated three thousand made the journey – as part of the broader propaganda campaign in the fight against fascism. With such restricted options available to those fleeing the conflict, hundreds of thousands eventually fled across the border into France.[23]

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[21] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, M. Berenstein, 'Jewish Colonization in Palestine: II', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 30, No. 6 (Dec. 1934), pp. 797-819, p. 816.
[22] M. Burleigh and W. Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933*-45 (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 88-9, 108-9.
[23] D. Kowalsky, *Stalin and the Spanish Civil War* (New York, 2006), pp. 249-50.

For sure, restrictive immigration policies were crucial to closing down options for migrants but other dynamics were important to the decision to migrate too. The historiography of immigration distinguishes between 'push' and 'pull' factors.[24] Push factors were influences in the 'home' country that encouraged or discouraged emigration. Nazi Germany's desire to remove its Jewish population is, of course, the most blatant example. A more benign practice of social engineering was the assisted passages scheme employed by the British authorities to 'export surplus labour' – in other words, unwanted working-class labour, both male and female – to the empire. Up until the second quarter of the nineteenth century, free migrants to the New World (that is, those who were not slaves, deportees to penal colonies, or forced labourers) had been 'spontaneous', although often persuaded by generous land grants. Thereafter, in addition to unassisted migrants, schemes of 'assisted' migration were introduced. Originally devised as a means to reduce overcrowding in Britain, they were therefore more about encouraging emigration than to develop the colonies of Australia and New Zealand, although colonial authorities and local businesses used the schemes to encourage immigration when labour shortages occurred or to discourage migration during economic depressions. Assisted migration of this type continued into the twentieth century and was even strengthened through the Empire Settlement Act of 1922 with an estimated 100,000 British women emigrating through such schemes during the interwar period.[25] Another British scheme, widely supported at the time but now deeply controversial, was 'forced' child migration. Approximately 150,000 children in institutional or charitable care whose

[24] See e.g. Hatton and Williamson, 'International Migration', p. 28.

[25] The British politician Edward Gibbon Wakefield proposed a scheme of 'assisted' immigration initially to South Australia to be financed by land sales, which was then widened to the rest of the Australian states and New Zealand, in Tait, 'Migration and Settlement', p. 38. See also, M. Harper and S. Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 222-9; S. Constantine, 'Empire Migration and Social Reform, 1880-1950', in C. Pooley and I. Whyte (eds.), *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants: A Social History of Migration* (London, 1991), pp. 62-83.

parents were absent were resettled within the empire between the early seventeenth and mid-twentieth centuries.[26]

But during the nationalistic interwar period, push factors worked in the opposite direction as a means to discourage emigration and acted as pull factors instead. Directives on emigration 'propaganda', as it was referred to at the time, were issued as a means of persuading residents to refrain from emigrating. Examples included the regulation of advertisements for emigration so as to prevent the supply of false information to potential emigrants but, in some cases, they were used to ban private advertising altogether. In Poland, an Order of the President in 1927 proscribed 'all emigration propaganda...for the purposes of encouraging persons to go abroad'. In Italy, legislation was passed in 1930 that introduced harsh financial penalties for anyone encouraging Italians to emigrate by any means of advertising.[27] The Italian authorities also terminated its railway subsidy in 1927 which had been a longstanding economic inducement to emigrate. Other measures to assume greater control of migration included state institutions managing all aspects of recruitment for employment to the information and advice granted to potential emigrants. Naturally, the advice given was open to potential abuse by those authorities which wanted to restrict emigration, which as a 1936 study by the ILO noted, had been the policy of 'several' emigration countries since the war, some of which had 'compelled their information services to advise would-be emigrants to stay at home'.[28]

High levels of unemployment also reduced intercontinental migration as unemployment reduced the savings that were required for long distance travel, thus encouraging further intra-European migration. Additionally, the reduction in global migration can also be attributed to the

[26] Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, pp. 247-50.
[27] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *The Migration of Workers: Recruitment, Placing, and Conditions of Labour*, Studies and Reports, Series O (Migration), No.5 (Geneva, 1936), pp. 58-60.
[28] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Migration of Workers*, p. 62.

impact of the ILO through its promotion of unemployment insurance.[29] There were certainly significant weaknesses as insurance was not universally available to all workers with many excluded due to race, gender, and profession, and payments were often maintained barely above subsistence levels. Moreover, coverage was limited. Nonetheless, unemployment insurance discouraged prospective migrants because there was at least some income support in their home country during periods of unemployment. A departing migrant might sacrifice that insurance if they emigrated and payments were not necessarily available in the receiving country. This was conceivably an important deterrent that prevented immigration to the USA as no unemployment insurance scheme existed there before the Second World War.

Certainly, the motivation for migration was not limited to the actions of international organizations or the state and a blurring between push and pull factors often occurred. Female migrants, for instance, migrated for many different reasons. Cultural assumptions of a family's breadwinner determined that many women followed husbands, fathers, or other male family members but for many women, particularly single women, emigration was an escape from a family's financial problems, declining status, a 'shame' at home e.g. pregnancy, for widows it could be to start a new life, and for others it was a means to take flight from a conservative community and to seek better opportunities abroad. A good example of the latter were those single Irish women who sought improved prospects abroad often as nuns or missionaries.[30]

The most compelling argument, however, that affected the flow of emigrants and accounts for the decline in migration during the Depression was the pull factor of economics advocated by Hatton and Williamson. Here, it is said that the key motivation for migrants in the period was that

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[29] Hatton and Williamson, 'International Migration', pp. 27-9; Gemery, 'Immigrants and Emigrants', pp. 185-7.
[30] Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, pp. 216-20; B. Walsh, *Roman Catholic Nuns in England and Wales, 1800-1937* (Dublin, 2002); P. Fitzgerald and B. Lambkin, *Migration in Irish History, 1607-2007* (Basingstoke, 2008).

economic, and specifically employment, conditions in the receiving country were better than those at home. Relative wage levels were critical as migrants anticipated improved prospects for themselves and their families. Economic conditions were more of a pull than a push factor since migrants did not always originate from the poorest countries and, more importantly, when economies were depressed or industries in decline, immigration fell or could even result in net emigration from a 'receiving' country. Hatton and Williamson take account of the emigration rate of the previous decade and the stock of previous migrants, thereby granting importance to the existence of migrant networks, and so deem it to be an 'econ-demographic' model.[31]

Krissman has argued more recently, albeit in a contemporary context, that the key spur for international migration is the demand for labour. Krissman refutes the 'migrant network' thesis, which he believes underplays 'non-homegrown actors' in responding to demand for immigrant employment and overstates the role of family and kin networks in perpetuating migration.[32] Networks were clearly a very important dimension of the migration process – the preponderance of remittances and prepaid passages was ample evidence[33] – but the demand-side arguments are more persuasive in the context of the Great Depression since the 'migrant network' theory cannot explain the dramatic decline in immigration that occurred during the 1930s. Links between migrants were incredibly important to the migration flow – migration and migrants were rarely static with net migration estimated to be only about 50-70% of total migration – which ensured a perpetual dialogue between migrants of sending and receiving countries. For sure, this was a two-way process so while networks offered information and assistance to prospective migrants the

[31] Hatton and Williamson, 'International Migration', pp. 9-10.
[32] F. Krissman, '"Sin Coyote Ni Patron": Why the 'Migrant Network' Fails to Explain International Migration', *International Migration Review*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2005), pp. 4–44.
[33] K. Fedorowich and A. Thompson, *Empire, Migration and Identity in the British world* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 11-12.

constant flow of returning migrants also ensured that potential new recruits were only too aware of the most current economic and employment conditions. And during the 1930s, of course, the news travelling home was mostly dire.

That the pull factor of deteriorating economic circumstances weakened during the 1930s is evidenced through the immigration statistics. Taking the decade in its entirety, immigration to the USA not only failed to reach the quota restrictions imposed by the government but it actually experienced net emigration.[34] This pattern of reduced immigration during the 1930s was repeated in Argentina, Australia, and Canada where the number of immigrants declined markedly compared to 1920s levels.[35] In Argentina, immigration fell from 95,000 in 1926 to 4,000 in 1931; after 1932, there was net emigration.[36] A major disincentive for migrants during depressions was that they were usually the first to lose their jobs.

The importance of economic conditions in the 'immigration' country was not lost on the ILO. In fact, it concluded as much in an earlier publication *Unemployment: Some International Aspects 1920-1928*.[37] This report outlined how rising unemployment did not always lead to increased emigration and, in fact, often resulted in the opposite. Moreover, whilst it noted that emigration tended to alleviate unemployment it recognized that emigration could only ever be a 'partial remedy'. The study, amongst others that the ILO had conducted during the 1920s when unemployment was at worrying but more manageable levels than in the 1930s, helped to contribute to the ILO's view that there was no panacea for unemployment. The conclusion was a critical one

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[34] Gemery, 'Immigrants and Emigrants', pp. 183-5.
[35] Taylor, 'Mass Migration', p. 94; E. Richards, *Destination Australia: Migration to Australia since 1901* (Sydney, 2008), p. 116.
[36] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, Dr E. Siewers, 'Unemployment in Argentina', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 31, No. 6 (June 1935), pp. 786-810, p. 787.
[37] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Unemployment: Some International Aspects, 1920-1928*, Studies and Reports, Series C (Employment and Unemployment), No. 13 (Geneva, 1929), p. 136. See also W. A. Carrothers, *Emigration from the British Isles, with Special reference to the Development of Overseas Dominions* (London, 1929) and H. Jerome, *Migration and Business Cycles* (New York, 1926).

and a position that the ILO, and the trade unions, repeatedly returned to during the Great Depression. They consistently pressed for a multifaceted approach to combat unemployment in the expectation that the combined efforts would have an amplified impact. The trouble was that when the ILO first began its concerted approach to tackling unemployment in late 1930 conditions were so much worse than anything that had been experienced during the 1920s and, furthermore, unemployment had become a global problem. In terms of migration, therefore, countries that had previously welcomed immigrants effectively closed their doors.

The ILO made one further interesting observation in a 1929 report *Unemployment: Some International Aspects 1920-1928*, an essential element that was fundamental to the economic development of new areas: the need for capital. The importance of generating capital was difficult to overstate in so many areas of life, as the previous chapter on economic policy pointed out, and a consistent problem that stood at the centre of the League and ILO's efforts to combat unemployment during the Depression. Public works, housing, nutrition – through a shift in production from cereals to 'protective' foods – and migration all required capital investment that required outside intervention, whether it was a government, local authority, private investor, or a farmer to initiate construction or production. The ILO, in the belief that the most important aspect of migration was the demand for labour in immigration countries, noted with 'great satisfaction' that some countries were still willing to accept immigrants. However, it was also aware that a lack of capital was hindering the migration process as capital was required to initiate migration and to help the settler to be successful. Offering migrants the opportunity to establish themselves was the best method of ensuring that they avoided becoming a burden on an immigration country's resources. Sufficient capital, the ILO argued, could enable a virtuous cycle of increased migration

and economic development.[38] This investigation was not followed through at the time although it did return to the issue of capital investment as part of its broader study into intercontinental migration in the late 1930s.

One further factor complicating the ILO's handling of migration in this period was that the major powers that were members of the League and ILO were also empires. It meant that whilst the ILO was never directly associated with the more unsavoury discussions about race and biology that took place in many countries, its responses to migration were nonetheless framed by aspects of broader colonial thinking and modelling. The ILO believed, as did the International Institute of Agriculture (IIA), that other countries' resources, for instance land in the undeveloped regions of Central and South America, could be 'exploited' by 'surplus populations' through the promotion of international migration, a formula that closely resembled the British assisted passages schemes to its white Dominions introduced during the previous century (mentioned above).[39] Private organizations, albeit with different motives, also emerged; one of the most famous was the Jewish Colonization Association founded in 1889 through the philanthropy of Baron Maurice von Hirsch. Established to help Jews escape from persecution and pogroms in Eastern Europe, it operated in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Palestine, Poland, Romania, and Russia. However, the number of migrants that it aided in each year was small though rising; approximately 1000 in 1899, 3100 in 1930.[40]

The colonial powers were also able to box in the agency of the ILO (and the League) over many issues by citing infringement of sovereignty. A classic example was the issue of 'forced'

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[38] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Unemployment: Some International Aspects 1920-1928,* p. 200.
[39] Tait, 'Migration and Settlement', p. 40; LONA, R2856, 10D/12378/12378, League of Nations, Commission of Enquiry for European Union, Unemployment Committee, 10 Jul. 1931.
[40] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, Dr E. Siewers, 'Openings for Settlers in Argentina', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Oct. 1934), pp. 457-91, pp. 474-6.

labour; that is, involuntary labour performed under duress and a practice carried out in many colonies by both colonial administrators and private enterprises. Thomas was a vocal advocate of its abolition but the ILO was only able to gain agreement to pass a Convention in 1930 that condemned it and which sought an end to its practice. At the time, only the British government ratified the Convention and the practice thus continued in the colonies of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Portugal, and in South Africa through until the end of the Second World War.[41]

1930-1: The ILO presses for action against unemployment

As the previous chapter on public works revealed, the ILO's Governing Body conducted a lengthy discussion on the rapidly deteriorating unemployment situation in October 1930 (see pp. 43-5). At that time, it decided to reconvene its Unemployment Committee and advised it to investigate migration, alongside public works, as the basis of its approach to tackle unemployment.[42] The Unemployment Committee's resulting proposals, contained in a brief report, suggested a twofold approach advocating both internal and international migration. Internal migration was to focus on the development of employment exchanges, or the introduction of a system if no network already existed, together with an emphasis on more effective collaboration for schemes of reemployment and retraining. International migration was to aim for international cooperation to encourage the 'free movement and placing of men in unexploited regions capable of utilizing their activity'. This, of course, smacked of old-style imperialism. The committee advocated a mixed approach that required both state-led and market-based solutions. As employment exchanges were state-run institutions, it was believed that the state should help to

[41] Maul, *Human Rights*, pp. 23-5.
[42] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 50th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Brussels, 11 Oct. 1930, pp. 683-96, 788-9.

facilitate international migration to these 'unexploited lands' and it was even suggested that exchanges could be used to help, 'if required', in the 'placing' of workers in public works schemes. The private sector on the other hand was expected to create the employment.[43]

Whilst the reference to 'placing' brought up uncomfortable resonances with unscrupulous employment practices, such as forced labour, it is important to recognize that the ILO did not view 'placement' in such terms. It was certainly true that 'placed' workers had been known to be manipulated into accepting unfair contracts of employment and that foreign workers were generally subjected to inferior living and working conditions. But these were issues that the ILO had worked diligently to address throughout the interwar period. To overcome potential abuses the ILO supported countries that concluded bilateral agreements aimed at ensuring equality of treatment between migrant and indigenous workers, and with organising and regulating migration; by April 1931, the ILO reported that twenty-four agreements had been signed in Europe between sixteen states. As with much of the developing social agenda in the period, however, enforcement of the regulations was a much greater problem than recognition of the issue. In the first instance, though, it felt like progress to encourage states to acknowledge the problem and to ensure that foreign workers were treated fairly by brokering these agreements.[44]

The discussions in the ILO's Unemployment Committee meeting, and the subsequent Governing Body session that considered the Committee's proposals, were interesting in a number of other ways too. They revealed suggestions from several trade unionists for radical new approaches to the organization of production as well as other controversial issues such as wage levels and hours of work. Agreement between the workers' and employers' groups on wages and

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[43] LONA, R2856, 10D/12378/12378, International Labour Office, Report of the Unemployment Committee, Jan. 1931.

[44] LONA, R2856, 10D/12378/12378, International Labour Office, Proposals of the International Labour Office for practical action in connection with unemployment (for submission to the CEEU), Apr. 1931.

the working week proved impossible, however. The discussions further exposed the false boundary between the economic and the social with which the ILO had to contend. The deliberations also made apparent how the ILO felt compelled to be engaged in a constant act of justifying its relevance during the 1930s. The spectre of mass unemployment had obliged the ILO to reassess its strategy and to examine ways of creating jobs, of ensuring that workers were aware that these opportunities existed, and then, crucially, of making clear that the ILO had been instrumental in providing those opportunities. These acts of self-validation appeared to be aimed at its core constituency, the workers, rather than at its paymasters, the government delegates at the League, since its attempts to combat unemployment, as Léon Jouhaux identified, intended to 'endeavour by all possible means to arrive at practical solutions', whether that encroached upon the League's technical work or not. Moreover, Thomas insisted that the ILO had 'a duty to educate public opinion' by publicizing its discussions with a view to ensuring that its message was disseminated and heard.

Thomas, as ever, was at the centre of these existential debates. He responded to those who questioned whether the ILO had any remit to investigate the economic effects of unemployment with the assertion that it was 'impossible' to distinguish between the economic and social aspects of unemployment. He agreed that the ILO should not extend its studies beyond the social sphere but claimed that economic factors unquestionably caused unemployment and, as such, the ILO should not be prevented from considering economic influences during its investigations. Moreover, he was no longer prepared to let this hold the ILO back. He reminded the Governing Body that some of the League's delegates had pretended to be entirely ignorant of the ILO's existence and that he had been compelled on occasions to intervene 'to ensure that the ILO was

mentioned in the resolutions of the EFO'. Noting the potential overlap with the EFO Thomas advocated 'day to day' collaboration with the League's economic work.[45]

Franciszek Sokal, a former Minister of Labour and Social Welfare in Poland who was Permanent Delegate to both the League of Nations and to the ILO's Governing Body, continued this theme during the Governing Body's Session in January 1931. He declared that whilst the Unemployment Committee's report had been useful and that the Committee should continue its theoretical investigations, he felt that it had not gone far enough. This was, he stated, no fault of the Committee but of the ILO's constitution which limited it to research and bringing forward Draft Conventions and Recommendations. The ILO had considered various aspects of the causes and consequences of unemployment since its first Washington Conference in 1919 but its enquiries had been limited and piecemeal. However, Sokal believed that the League's CEEU had granted the ILO a real prospect of creating 'schemes for practical action' as it was not, unlike the ILO, constitutionally bounded. The inference here was that the ILO could circumvent the EFO by presenting its ideas directly to the CEEU, a specially convened commission. Sokal said that he expected the CEEU to react positively to any potential solutions that the ILO might propose, as the CEEU had already referenced 'the very grave consequences' of unemployment and that it had shown that it was willing to act quickly when it had addressed agricultural problems in Europe.[46]

It is not clear if Thomas had discussed this approach with Sokal before the Governing Body's Session but he was nonetheless quick to support Sokal's proposition. Thomas sensed a prospect, in his words, for 'immediate action' against unemployment through the CEEU and therefore proposed that the ILO should immediately commence preparation of a separate, much

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[45] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 50th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Brussels, 11 Oct. 1930, pp. 693-5.
[46] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 51st Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 31 Jan. 1931, pp. 78-9.

more detailed memorandum of the Unemployment Committee's earlier ideas to tackle unemployment that the ILO could then submit formally to the CEEU.[47] This enabled the ILO greater discretion over the direction of the investigation and to commence its work without delay. Thomas was happy to report back to the ILO's Governing Body that not only had the CEEU viewed the ILO's memorandum favourably but that it had also decided to establish a Mixed Committee on Unemployment, which was to comprise of six members of the CEEU and six members of the ILO – two from each of the three groups of the organization – to study the problems of unemployment.[48] Directing the ILO's work towards the CEEU obviously gave the proposals a European flavour which troubled the Argentinian government representative and ambassador to Switzerland, José María Cantilo, who pointed out that unemployment was obviously a global, and not solely a European, problem. He may well have considered that the CEEU could be a weapon of a new wave of European expansionism in the light of the multitude of problems affecting Europe at the time, although he did not say as much. Thomas accepted Cantilo's premise that unemployment was a global phenomenon but countered that the CEEU offered an opportunity that was simply too good to miss. Thomas's suggested compromise was that the ILO's examination of the Unemployment Committee's ideas should focus immediately on what was distinctively European about the unemployment problem, but that it should also separately examine how that connected to unemployment in a global context.[49] Cantilo's fears were not misplaced, however, as the attention on ways to combat unemployment was directed wholly towards Europe.

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[47] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 51st Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 31 Jan. 1931, pp. 83-4.
[48] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 53rd Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, International Labour Office, Geneva, 26 May 1931, pp. 469-70.
[49] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 51st Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 31 Jan. 1931, pp. 81, 84.

The ILO's memorandum contained extended proposals on both internal and international migration. Internal migration, the ILO suggested, should be addressed through a better organization of employment exchanges and a widening of their functions, although it made no claim that the prevalent widespread unemployment was mainly due to the 'maldistribution of the labour supply'. However, it contended that a number of improvements to the operation of the national exchange systems, based largely around closer cooperation between the individual exchanges and a more intimate knowledge of the labour market, could help alleviate at least some unemployment. It was suggested that exchanges could collect and distribute more detailed information about specific jobs; they could help with the redistribution or transfer of labour between industries; they could direct retraining to the 'requirements of production' through close observation of the demand and supply of the labour market; they could remain in contact with employers to obtain real-time information so as to be able to act swiftly when companies, for instance, were rationalizing and thus they could seek to offset the worst effects of the resulting unemployment; and they could facilitate, if necessary, the placing of labour on public works schemes.[50]

The ILO's recommendations with regards to international migration fell into two closely aligned categories. The ILO offered itself as an intermediary of national labour exchanges and/or as an international clearing house sitting between those states or companies that wanted to recruit workers and those countries with potential migrants. The first proposal suggested that the functions of national employment exchanges could be extended to aid international migration, but as was the practice in local exchanges it would be targeted at individuals or small groups. It advocated following up on a provision, initially included in the original 1919 convention on unemployment,

[50] LONA, R2856, 10D/12378/12378, International Labour Office, Proposals of the International Labour Office for practical action in connection with unemployment (for submission to the CEEU), Apr. 1931.

that had called for the ILO to coordinate national employment exchange systems. At the time, the employment agencies and national governments ignored the offer. In 1927, the ILO attempted to extend the idea of a coordinating role to one of acting as a facilitator in the international placing of employment – a notable shift in terminology. It proposed that national exchange networks should submit periodical information on labour market conditions to the ILO which would produce a 'summary of the international labour market'. The ILO would then be in a position to be able to share that information with other ILO member countries. The response to this had also been disappointing with only the Swiss Federal Labour Office providing a regular update. The ILO noted, however, that since the Depression had begun it had been approached by several governments suggesting that it should pursue this question again. Subsequently, in a later memorandum of July 1931 it produced ideas for an international labour exchange.[51]

The ILO was only too aware of the sensitivity of the language of an 'international' labour exchange and so avoided the term; instead it used 'international placing of labour'. As a means to sell the idea to national governments, placing indicated some form of state control over migration whereas an international labour exchange, run under the auspices of the ILO, not only implied more freedom for workers but it potentially devolved control to the external body. The ILO claimed that even during periods of high unemployment industries in some countries were short of labour and it might be beneficial and cheaper to encourage workers to emigrate from one country to another rather than retrain workers in the 'home' country. The ILO, or another associated body, could thus operate as a 'clearing house' for groups of workers which could help monitor labour market conditions across borders and across industries. In fact, the ILO, at the behest of certain employers and workers' organizations, had previously facilitated exchanges of groups of workers,

[51] LONA, R2856, 10D/12378/12378, League of Nations, Commission of Enquiry for European Union, Unemployment Committee, Memorandum by the International Labour Office, 29 June 1931.

mainly in the printing and hotel industries, where employers had felt that their workers would benefit from exposure to another country and language, and broaden the knowledge of their trade. The ILO considered their management in this space invaluable experience since they highlighted practical problems – such as employer discontent when expectations were not fulfilled – that the ILO could look to address in future programmes. The ILO believed that with the application of a more uniform methodology across national boundaries it could perform this function more effectively.[52]

The second strand of international migration that the ILO addressed in its memorandum of April 1931 was the migration characterized by 'mass movements' of populations evident particularly during the nineteenth century. This large-scale migration was predominantly intercontinental and had helped to facilitate the economic development of the 'receiving' countries. The ILO conceded that these population movements were no longer feasible as any substantial 'unchecked' migration could lead to social and economic problems. However, governments who wished to re-engage in limited migration had begun to conclude bilateral treaties aimed at its organization and regulation. The ILO believed that it could extend and improve these bilateral solutions with the ILO either helping countries to conclude more bilateral agreements or establishing the criteria by which all further treaties were determined by incorporating the regulations in a Convention. The ILO also offered to establish itself as an intermediary and act as an international clearing house between those wishing to recruit workers and those with potential emigrants, thus enabling countries to move beyond bilateral agreements. The ILO already fielded requests from some countries on employment and residential conditions pertaining to immigration and emigration, but it believed that if it was able to 'increase the volume and reliability' of

[52] LONA, R2856, 10D/12378/12378, International Labour Office, Proposals of the International Labour Office for practical action in connection with unemployment (for submission to the CEEU), Apr. 1931.

information, particularly on labour market conditions, it could act in this capacity for multiple countries and occupations. If the protection of foreign workers could be ensured – with the regulation of employment agencies to prevent dishonest practices and the establishment of 'model' contracts to guarantee wages, nature and hours of work, etc. – combined with the other elements of an enhanced ILO role in the organization and regulation of migration, the ILO believed that it would be able to facilitate the 'suitable distribution in accordance with the capacities of migrants and the requirements of countries of immigration'. The hope was that it might encourage increased migration as the supply of labour would be more in tune with demand.[53]

Interestingly, the ILO's memorandum offered an insightful perspective on the importance it placed on transnational links – the value of a functioning network based on personal and individual contacts. The ILO recognized that if it was to help with international migratory labour it required 'flexible and precise' information so that it could help match areas of demand with supply. It surmised, though, that its earlier efforts at coordination had been unsuccessful largely because it had conducted only 'official correspondence' with the national exchange systems, which meant that communication was conducted between bureaucrats unknown to each other and had not been based on close relationships. To overcome this, the ILO suggested that 'personal contact' and an 'exchange of views' between the management of national employment exchange systems was essential and it proposed that the CEEU should invite governments to send the managers of their national employment exchange networks to an International Placing Conference under the auspices of the ILO. Of course, this would also allow the ILO to establish 'personal contact' with

[53] LONA, R2856, 10D/12378/12378, International Labour Office, Proposals of the International Labour Office for practical action in connection with unemployment (for submission to the CEEU), Apr. 1931; Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Migration of Workers,* p. 58.

the managers of national networks and aid the ILO in its quest for detailed and regular information of labour market conditions.[54]

Whilst the decision to instigate and then broaden the ILO's investigation into unemployment was largely welcomed, the recommendations were, however, not met with universal approval. A number of the Governing Body's members not only expressed divergent views but revealed uncertainty and even scepticism that the ideas would actually provide any relief. Müller, the German trade union representative, was scathing of the proposals stating that he was 'greatly disappointed' and that it was 'illusory' to believe that they could significantly reduce unemployment. He called upon the ILO to work towards finding the 'equilibrium between the purchasing capacity of the masses and production'.[55] Jouhaux agreed that the report was inadequate to deal with the unemployment crisis. Since employers showed little or no willingness to conciliate with the workers' plight he believed that more direct intervention was required to create an 'economic system that was properly organized and controlled'. He did concede, however, that to find a complete remedy was an impossible task.[56]

The biggest division, though, was with the employers. Alfred Lambert-Ribot, the French employers' representative on the Governing Body and Secretary-General of the Association of Metal and Mining, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering and kindred Industries, contended that the recommendations on internal and international migration were measures designed to remedy structural rather than cyclical unemployment, and that they were therefore inadequate measures to

[54] LONA, R2856, 10D/12378/12378, League of Nations, Commission of Enquiry for European Union, Unemployment Committee, Memorandum by the International Labour Office, 29 Jun. 1931.
[55] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 52nd Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 22 Apr. 1931, pp. 315-16.
[56] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 51st Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 31 Jan. 1931, p. 66; Minutes of the 52nd Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 22 Apr. 1931, p. 326.

tackle the crisis.[57] Others too cast doubt on the ability of employment exchanges to offer a solution. Charles Picquenard, the French Minister for Labour, pointed out that the ILO had to decide firstly on the role of the international exchange. If it was merely to exchange information concerning vacancies, then it could be established swiftly but this would have little impact on reducing unemployment. If the exchange was envisioned to be 'more active' and directly involved in the international placing of workers, that is, acting as an intermediary between recruiters and workers willing to emigrate, then that would be a much more sensitive development bringing it into conflict with national migration policies. Picquenard noted that bilateral treaties had been ratified and whilst he acknowledged that the idea of embedding this through an international organization certainly seemed to offer benefits, numerous technical issues would have to be overcome and the negotiations would be protracted. Bilateral treaties had been employed positively in that they were used by some governments to promote immigration to fill vacant positions, but they were also used negatively by some authorities that tried to 'encourage' or force emigration. The most blatant example of the period was, of course, Jewish emigration to Palestine.

Moreover, Picquenard made the obvious but critical point that there was a severe imbalance between the demand and supply of labour in the world. France, he said, had no spare jobs in any activity that could not be filled at that time by the unemployed French. Müller asserted that Germany was suffering similarly and that there was simply no demand for labour despite an extensive network of employment exchanges. They had been reduced to the role of registering the unemployed and it was clear that establishing a system of exchanges in countries that lacked them would not reduce unemployment. A European Labour Exchange, he felt, would be equally ineffective since all European countries were suffering from overwhelming unemployment. Only

[57] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 51st Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 31 Jan. 1931, p. 72.

if the international exchange was global could he envisage it as having any utility.[58] Picquenard and Müller's interjections were further evidence of the nationalism versus internationalism conflict; both wanted to be able to 'export' their excess labour but did not want to accept workers from elsewhere. On Müller's last point concerning renewed intercontinental migration, Dr W. Riddell, an advisor to the Canadian government and the Canadian representative to the Governing Body, countered that the unemployment crisis stretched beyond Europe. Canada, which had maintained open borders and continued to act as one of the world's 'receiving' countries in the postwar era accepting 100,000 immigrants during 1930 alone, registered 200,000 unemployed at that time despite its sparse population. Riddell concluded that simply to 'transfer the unemployed' through international migration would not solve the unemployment crisis implying that neither the national nor the imperial model would work.[59]

Riddell's intervention was significant for two reasons. Firstly, it implied that the ILO and its Unemployment Committee had failed to consult immigration countries before suggesting that migration should be encouraged as a means to alleviate unemployment. This was a serious oversight by the ILO as it gave the appearance of an imperial master imposing policy from Geneva. It was a surprising and strange course of action for the ILO to take since it had conducted a long courtship with the governments of the Central and South American states to encourage them to join the organization. In order to create a truly global organization and to avoid accusations of Eurocentrism, Thomas and later Butler both attempted to broaden the ILO's constituency. The second reason Riddell's intercession was of interest was that, as a representative of what the British and French delegates had a tendency to describe as one of the world's 'unexploited' regions, it

[58] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 52nd Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 22 Apr. 1931, pp. 313-15.
[59] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 51st Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 31 Jan. 1931, p. 83.

called attention to the major assumption of the ILO's recommendation, that 'immigration' countries would be content to accept immigrants. But that was no longer the reality as even in those countries that had started to readmit immigrants during the 1920s – albeit in fewer numbers than before the First World War – the depression had forced a rethink and severe restrictions were imposed once more. Moreover, the ILO was aware of the depth of feeling towards immigration in the region since new immigration restrictions had been imposed as unemployment had spread to Central and South American countries. An internal ILO memo from early 1932 noted that government and public opinion in both Central and South America were 'absolutely against' any form of immigration and confirmed that laws had been passed to restrict foreign workers just as they had been elsewhere in the world. Mexico, for instance, had enacted a law that codified that a specific percentage of workers had to be Mexican nationals.[60]

In seeking reasons to understand why the ILO promoted migration as a solution to unemployment, it is useful to remember that even though attitudes to race, biology, and population control had hardened in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the introduction of the more draconian, rather than merely limiting, immigration policies such as those in the USA were very recent developments. Moreover, those who worked in or with the ILO were, of course, old enough to have experienced a much freer world. They also inhabited, in their position as delegates, advisors, and representatives at the ILO a freer existence crossing boundaries virtually at will. Their hope was that, like economic nationalism, the barriers recently imposed would be temporary phenomena. The ILO employed many individuals who had pressed for social reform or who had contributed to policymaking in the social sphere before the war, people like Henri Fuss, who continued to believe in the freedom of movement of workers as well as goods and capital. Fuss,

[60] ILOA, E 1/01/1, Emigration, Internal note di Palma to Thomas, 16 Feb. 1932.

from 1909, had been head of the Parisian secretariat of the International Association for the Struggle against Unemployment before joining the Office's Emigration and Unemployment Section in 1920 as assistant to its then Chief, Louis Varlez. Fuss became Chief of the Unemployment Section himself in 1933. Of course, many of the ILO's main constituency, the trade unionists, appealed to a higher authority than the nation-state through socialism.[61] The war and subsequent problems of the 1920s had caused some to resort to national solutions – the soul-searching of many within the trade union movement before, during, and after the First World War brought this sharply into focus – but it was true that most of those employed by and involved with the ILO continued to believe that freedom of movement, be it internal or external, was a worker's 'right'.

With this principle in mind, the ILO's proposals to promote migration were perhaps less surprising. But besides their misguided optimism it was also the case that the ILO had to be seen to be doing something and this fitted in with the ILO's conviction that whilst there was no panacea for unemployment any action that could reduce unemployment, however small, should be pursued as each reduction would by itself have positive knock-on effects. The negative reactions from members of the Governing Body, mentioned above, reveal the despair that many felt about their plight but they were not unanimous views. Others saw potential in the suggestions even it was very limited. Jouhaux did not agree with his Minister of Labour's pessimistic assessment of an international labour exchange; Jouhaux thought it was 'obvious' that it would offer many benefits. Firstly, it could fill a gap which existed in the collation of statistics and other information regarding local labour markets. Secondly, it could be involved in the placing of workers and, although Jouhaux agreed that the demand for labour was limited, some pockets of demand existed, such as

[61] LONA, R2856, 10D/12378/12378, International Labour Office, Proposals of the International Labour Office for practical action in connection with unemployment (for submission to the CEEU), Apr. 1931.

agricultural labour in France, even when general unemployment was widespread.[62] Müller, too, despite his vehement general criticisms of the report, believed that the international placing of labour might produce results.

Thomas was attentive to the disapproval expressed in the Governing Body but equally passionate in his defence of the ILO's proposals. He explained that practical solutions did not necessarily mean solutions which could be organized immediately or ones that produced instant results. He admitted that it would take time to organize an international or a European labour exchange. Moreover, the criticism that an international exchange would be more useful in countering structural rather than cyclical unemployment assumed that they were mutually exclusive phenomena, but this was evidently not true. In fact, Thomas believed that structural unemployment 'co-existed' with and could 'aggravate' cyclical unemployment. Thus, he contended that an international exchange offered an opportunity for 'appreciable' results. He also hoped that the exchange would be able to begin a process that would eliminate some long-standing employment issues for foreign workers that other Governing Body members had highlighted such as unwarranted expulsion or refusal of entry. Thomas concluded that the most important aspect of the proposals was that they were 'practical' and offered 'a definite basis' on which to proceed. Despite the reservations articulated during the Governing Body's discussions it voted unanimously to send the proposals to the CEEU.[63]

The CEEU had, as mentioned above, decided to establish its own mixed Unemployment Committee comprised of six CEEU-appointed government representatives and six ILO representatives to investigate the ILO's proposals more fully. It met on July 1st-2nd 1931. Sokal's

[62] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 52nd Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 22 Apr. 1931, p. 326.
[63] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 52nd Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 22 Apr. 1931, pp. 331-2.

prediction that the CEEU might be more attentive to the intensifying depression proved to be correct. That Germany was in an increasingly fragile economic situation and that the CEEU's Unemployment Committee included so many countries – Austria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Poland, and Yugoslavia – which were amongst the region's most vulnerable due to their heavy dependence on agriculture may well have been factors.[64] As it was, the CEEU's Unemployment Committee accepted the ILO's core recommendations. It sent a report up to the CEEU's Economic Co-ordination Sub-Committee. Thomas expressed his hope to the Economic Co-ordination Sub-Committee that the ILO's ideas could be put to work 'without delay'.[65] This committee proposed that the CEEU should approve the recommendations and progress towards an international body to coordinate national placing systems and to organize its conference of experts. The CEEU agreed and sent them to the League's Assembly to be considered in September 1931. The Assembly also approved them and instructed the League's Council to act upon them.[66]

Despite the favourable reception at the League's Assembly, there was to be no follow-up on the ILO's ideas for migration. The timing, of course, could not have been worse for the Depression was just about to move into a more advanced and critical stage. 1931 was the year that the Depression became 'Great' as it transformed mid-year from a severe trade downturn to a full-blown financial and economic crisis. The impact of the summer's European banking crisis was only just being digested as the Assembly prepared to sit for its 12th Session at the beginning of September, and then during the session itself, on 21st September, Britain decided to come off of the gold standard.[67] The motivation behind the uniquely British imperial form of economic

[64] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 53rd Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 26 May 1931, p. 469.
[65] LONA, R2856, 10D/30959/28648, League of Nations, Commission of Enquiry for European Union, Minutes of the Economic Co-ordination Sub-Committee, 1 Sep. 1931.
[66] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 55th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 17 Oct. 1931, p. 749.
[67] Clavin, *Great Depression*, pp. 130-6, 139-40.

nationalism was exposed by Frederick Leggett, the Principal Assistant Secretary at the British Ministry of Labour and the British representative on the ILO's Governing Body, at the next Session of the ILO's Governing Body. Rather than reflecting on the global context of unemployment and depression he stressed its individual character. In Britain, he said that certain industries – specifically iron and steel, cotton, and wool – were suffering from different problems. He also indicated a bleak future ahead predicting that unemployment 'would probably not be solved for many years' but he failed to offer any suggestions. By allowing the pound to depreciate against gold and taking its empire along with it the British government had, of course, already set its course for tackling the next stage of the Great Depression.[68]

The intensification of the crisis in the summer and autumn of 1931 was felt widely and had profound consequences. Governments, responding in large measure to popular pressure, lurched to the right politically and, often accompanied by an uncomfortable nationalistic and racist rhetoric, pursued protectionist policies relentlessly and imposed even tougher restrictions on immigration. Migration as a solution to unemployment, already an unlikely policy solution, therefore became an inconceivable one. Thomas was quick to admit how political circumstances had hindered their chances of success.[69] Whilst he continued to insist that the ILO should explore all avenues for solutions to unemployment, migration was not on the agenda of the next meeting of the ILO's Unemployment Committee held in December 1931,[70] it was not discussed at the 16th Session of the International Labour Conference held in April 1932, and nor did it appear on the agenda at any Governing Body sessions during 1932. In contrast, during this same period, Thomas

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[68] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 55th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 17 Oct. 1931, p. 642.
[69] ILOA, International Labour Office, Record of Proceedings of the 16th Session of the International Labour Conference, Geneva, 1932, Report of the Director, p. 909.
[70] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 55th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 17 Oct. 1931, p. 640.

(and then Butler) and the ILO continued to advocate strongly that public works schemes be undertaken. As a policy, public works were a more feasible option because member governments had control over whether they instigated any works at all and, if they did, individually they reaped the economic and social benefits. Moreover, member governments were the ones that required outside assistance because they lacked capital for investment to secure funding for projects, an issue on which, as shown in the chapter on public works, the ILO had expended an enormous amount of time and effort.

However, whilst the ILO no longer actively pushed the migration agenda from late 1931 it nonetheless continued its work on the protection of foreign workers in their host countries and kept abreast of migration currents. It was, Thomas explained, the 'only course of action open' to them.[71] But, as the ILO's proposals to combat unemployment were seemingly passed endlessly from committee to council to assembly, criticism began to emerge from within the ILO from those frustrated at the lack of results. Thomas naturally defended its work. During the Governing Body's 55th Session in October 1931, he claimed that the ILO's efforts on unemployment had been 'underestimated' in some quarters but he was 'convinced' that their efforts had been 'far from useless'.[72] It was hardly a ringing endorsement but there was only so much that he could do; nationalism – in political and economic forms – was on the rise everywhere.

Echoes of imperialism: Land settlement in 'immigration' countries in the late 1930s

The ILO was never explicit – except with regards to gender where the worker was specified as male – but its 'imagined' worker up to the early 1930s was an urban, white, wage-paid,

[71] ILOA, International Labour Office, Record of Proceedings of the 16th Session of the International Labour Conference, Geneva, 1932, Report of the Director, p. 910.
[72] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 55th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 17 Oct. 1931, p. 640.

industrialized worker. But after its unsuccessful attempts during 1930-1 to facilitate international mobility for wage-paid labour through the co-ordination of national employment exchanges, there were signs that agricultural labour and the rural economy were coming more into focus.[73] In the latter part of the decade, the ILO began to look at land settlement in 'immigration' countries, that is, agricultural development, largely for agricultural labour be it tenant farmers or landless peasants.[74] The change of approach was perhaps due to an acceptance of the futility of its efforts in trying to find the industrialized worker gainful employment when opportunities in heavy industry and manufacturing were so limited and/or a belated recognition that agricultural labourers and the rural economy had also experienced a Great Depression and continued to experience serious employment and economic difficulties. The election of extreme right-wing parties in those Central and Eastern Europe countries whose economies remained dominated by agriculture brought this latter point sharply into focus.

The ILO's belief that international migration could help alleviate unemployment or, indeed, that migration was of itself positive never wavered. But its new idea was an acknowledgment that intra-European workers' mobility, which had emerged after the First World War as intercontinental migration had subsided, was also becoming less likely due to economic, nationalistic, and racist reasons. Whilst economic recovery had begun during 1933 in those countries that had come off the gold standard, unemployment was still exceptionally high: in 1934 for example, it averaged 16.7% in Britain, 18.9% in Sweden, and 26.1% in Austria.[75] Since 1930, 'new' migrants seeking opportunities abroad – as opposed to those being encouraged to return to

[73] A. Ribi Forclaz, 'A New Target for International Social Reform: The International Labour Organization and Working and Living Conditions in Agriculture in the Interwar Years', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 20, Special Issue No. 03 (Aug. 2011), pp. 307-29.
[74] The ILO used the terms 'emigration' and 'immigration' countries to denote those countries from Europe that had historically 'exported' labour and those in North and South America and Oceania that had 'imported' labour.
[75] Clavin, *Great Depression*, p. 112.

their country of birth – had been restricted to those countries, for instance Nazi Germany, whose governments specifically desired the expulsion of certain groups. The new approach was also quite obviously based on imperial models of encouraging 'excess' labour to migrate to undeveloped areas and relieve the pressure on the 'home' country.

The ILO accepted that certain constraints on European migration would almost certainly remain but it remained hopeful that intercontinental migration at some level would recommence. In January 1934, the ILO decided to try again and placed the idea on the agenda of the Permanent Migration Committee.[76] At this meeting, one of its two permanent migration experts, the Austrian Dr Fritz Rager (secretary of the Vienna Chamber of Workers and Employees and a member of the Permanent International Conference of Private Organizations for the Protection of Migrants, an organization that had been involved in the study of overseas settlement for many years), was invited to outline his solution to the perennial problem of how to finance international settlement. Rager's solution was a joint public and private funding scheme. He argued that whilst there was 'some justification' for governments to use public funds to encourage emigration as emigrants would no longer be a burden on their home state, if emigration was combined with private funding the migrant was more incentivized to ensure success. Rager's vision epitomized the colonial thinking that underpinned so many of the settlement schemes. He asserted that since 'tropical lands were so fruitful' with many different possibilities of cultivation it was not even necessary to seek migrants with agricultural experience as the new skills could be acquired and mastered easily.[77] The belief that 'vast, fertile lands' awaited human colonization was by no means an isolated one.[78]

[76] The Office established its Permanent Migration Committee in 1925 initially to protect the rights of immigrants but as with most of the Office's standing committees its remit broadened as time went on and new issues came under its auspices.
[77] ILOA, E 1000/7/1, Permanent Migration Committee meetings, 25 Jan. 1934.
[78] ILOA, E 2/5, Correspondence with individuals A-F, Brounste to ILO, 25 Oct. 1931; Thomas to Brounste, 13 Jan. 1932.

Rager's colonial and utopian view of untapped riches must be set in context alongside his article published in the *ILR* in 1934, 'The Settlement of the Unemployed on the Land in Austria'. As the title suggests he proposed that one way to relieve unemployment would be to encourage the unemployed to settle on the land. Germany had taken the initiative in this field during the Depression by establishing suburban settlements, but Rager also invoked the success of the allotment movement in Austria before, during, and after the First World War which had been useful in alleviating food shortages. He noted a number of small-scale successes and added that resettlement on land would also slow the rural-to-urban drift.[79] Indeed, this was one of the problems with Rager's solution. The number of opportunities for the unemployed to resettle in such schemes was always going to be tiny. Moreover, it was a backward-looking approach that professed to solve the problem of urban, industrial unemployment by attempting to de-industrialize and send people back to work in agriculture. It could be argued that Rager's vision for overseas migration was similarly regressive since it was based on a colonial model; a general observation of abundant land in, for instance, South America that could be exploited by Europeans migrants. It also assumed that becoming a successful farmer was easy. It probably appealed to the ILO since it reflected the preoccupation with the industrialized worker, but it also revealed an ignorance of the problems that had beset agriculture during the late 1920s and 1930s when primary prices experienced massive falls combined with established rural unemployment and poverty, issues into which, incidentally, the EFO were much more attuned.

While the ILO's thinking on migration continued to be informed by the sense that vast untapped resources existed, particularly land, it nonetheless decided to wait for an appropriate

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[79] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, Dr F. Rager, 'The Settlement of the Unemployed on the Land in Austria', *International Labour Review*, Vol 29, No. 3 (Mar. 1934), pp. 384-96, pp. 387-94.

moment to rekindle the question at a time when it believed that governments would be more amenable to the pro-migration argument. As the Depression gradually began to ease in certain parts of the world, although not in those countries which remained on the gold standard, the opportunities emerged. In 1936, the ILO published *The Migration of Workers: Recruitment, Placing, and Conditions of Labour*. The report was a general survey of the different methods and regulations involved in the recruitment and employment of migratory workers, but the ILO also took the opportunity to assert the positive effects of migration and to argue that policies to restrict migration had proven to be largely detrimental to those countries that had introduced them. Migration, it stated, was essentially a natural phenomenon and one of a system of 'currents' or exchanges (the others being goods, services, and capital) which attempted to compensate for the 'unequal distribution' between populations and 'natural or acquired resources'. These exchanges were so interconnected that any interruption to one undoubtedly affected the others and 'experience had repeatedly shown' that any attempt by a government to isolate one of the exchanges with a restrictive policy while allowing freedom of exchange for the others was a 'fallacy' that led to 'considerable difficulties'.

Moreover, the report presented a number of rhetorical yet fundamental questions asking whether a country had the right to restrict immigration, repatriate immigrants, or recall its own emigrants and conversely whether emigration should even be allowed. It professed not to pass comment on the question of whether migration was a 'panacea' for, or a cause of, the world's problems but affirmed that studies had shown that the effects of policies to restrict immigration were 'not always favourable' to the country that implemented them. Furthermore, the report stated that people had now started to doubt whether migrants were always 'dangerous competitors' for indigenous workers. It outlined the positive impact of migration in the hundred years before the

First World War when it had helped to bring 'vast areas...to a high pitch of economic development'. Migration had helped or had even established 'movements of capital and goods' and it was only the outbreak of the First World War that had curtailed these positive outcomes; it did admit, however, that opposition to migration had at times been 'lively'. The impact of the Great War on migration had been negative in that 'migration policies were henceforth directed towards other aims'. More positively, it noted that as economic conditions had slowly improved since 1933 migration had begun to increase again, a process that it expected to continue in countries that would 'once again need foreign workers to develop their resources'.[80]

Having utilized the introduction of the report to assert a positive stance towards migration, the remainder focused on the general principles of the recruitment and placing of workers. The study was therefore not aimed at exploring the role of migration as a means to combat unemployment, although it was naturally informed by the recent depression experience. It briefly considered the different approaches taken towards immigration by national governments, which often illuminated the form of organization and regulations. The USA and the countries of South America, when their borders were open to immigration, were 'suspicious' of inter-governmental agreements and contracted workers and preferred 'spontaneous' immigration. The British Dominions, on the other hand, had concluded agreements with other countries and established a recruiting and placing organization, although the report noted that immigration was almost entirely restricted to individuals arriving from Britain. European countries regulated much more heavily because the close proximity to their neighbours encouraged the feeling that there was a greater need to control the flow of migrants, without which 'serious economic or social consequences' would result. Regulations ranged from bilateral treaties between governments to numerous

[80] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Migration of Workers*, pp. 1-6.

processes involved in the recruitment of labour such as the recruiting procedure, eligibility for employment, employment contracts, transport, repatriation, living and working conditions, inspection, and the protection of workers. It included information on minutiae such as the training of emigrants to the prohibition of private enterprises to supply 'emigration propaganda'.[81]

It is revealing that this report, although primarily concerned with the protection of migratory workers during the recruitment process, showed how the ILO viewed the various regulations as a means by which they might encourage states to increase migration in the future, whereas they had been introduced for the opposite reason: to control and to limit migration. In addition to this report, the Governing Body also instructed the ILO to initiate studies specifically on migration and settlement that fitted with the long-term ambition of promoting intercontinental migration. In fact, it was the Argentinian government delegates at the ILC in both 1933 and 1934 who requested that the ILO should examine 'the international redistribution of labour and capital in connection with questions of immigration and land settlement', and which implied that Argentina would be amenable to allowing immigration in the future.[82] This may indeed have encouraged the ILO to press forward with the idea of settlement schemes and the ILO's Permanent Migration Committee to open a broad enquiry into the three elements of production: labour, land, and capital. The latter resulted in a series of articles discussing land settlement in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, New Zealand, and Palestine that were published in the *ILR* from late 1934.[83] The articles followed a similar format: they described historical and recent

[81] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Migration of Workers*, pp. 50-2.
[82] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, Siewers, 'Openings for Settlers in Argentina', p. 457.
[83] Amongst the numerous articles published between 1934 and 1939: Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, Siewers, 'Openings for Settlers in Argentina', pp. 457-91; M. Berenstein, 'Jewish Colonization in Palestine: I', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 30, No. 5 (Nov. 1934), pp. 623-35; M. Berenstein, 'Jewish Colonization in Palestine: II', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 30, No. 6 (Dec. 1934), pp. 797-819; R. Paula Lopès, 'Land Settlement in Brazil', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Feb. 1936), pp. 152-84; M. Berenstein, 'The Levant States under French Mandate and Problems of Emigration and Immigration', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 33, No. 5 (May 1936), pp. 685-720; Tait, 'Migration and Settlement', pp. 34-65; International Labour Office, 'Land Settlement

immigration patterns and land settlement; the types of settlement organizations involved; industrial and agricultural development which focused on transport links, irrigation, and the main crops under cultivation; and, most importantly from the ILO's point of view, the potential opportunities and suggestions for future land settlement and agricultural production.

In 1936, the ILO's Governing Body also asked the Conference of American States Members of the International Labour Organization held in Santiago to consider the question of migration from Europe to the Americas. The Conference's positive reception to this request encouraged the Governing Body to proceed further and undertake a more thorough enquiry. The ILO's Governing Body also decided to convene its Permanent Migration Committee to consider the direction and form of a broader enquiry and immediately dispatched a two-man mission to Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, in collaboration with the national authorities, to study the 'possibilities of immigration for settlement'. The early soundings, the ILO believed, towards accepting new immigrants were positive, although an overriding concern was 'financing the transport and establishment of settlers'. The results of the mission were published in the *ILR* in early 1937.[84] The Permanent Migration Committee believed that international collaboration could overcome these obstacles and passed a resolution asking the Governing Body to convene a conference of experts on migration and settlement.

Before proceeding, the Governing Body wanted to be sure that enough countries supported increased migration, at least in theory. Some concerns were articulated. The Brazilian authorities informed the ILO that they faced political difficulties at that time – the Chamber of Deputies was

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in Chile', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Sep. 1936), pp. 361-9; J. Legouis, 'The Problem of European Settlement in the Belgian Congo', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Oct. 1936), pp. 478-95.

[84] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, Dr E. Siewers, 'Immigration for Settlement in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay I', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Feb. 1937), pp. 215-46; Dr E. Siewers, 'Immigration for Settlement in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay II', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Mar. 1937), pp. 352-83.

about to debate a constitutional article concerning immigrant quotas – which prevented their commitment to any such conference but they said that they were in principle in favour of attending the conference and, in fact, still did so.[85] Most other states, meanwhile, responded positively with a number of countries in Central and South America acknowledging recent developments in which new immigrants, where they had remained on the land, had been absorbed and thrived in rural areas during the Depression.[86] The positive responses persuaded the Governing Body to convene Migration Conference which was held in February-March 1938 and brought together eighteen major emigration and immigration countries: Argentina, Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Hungary, Japan, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Switzerland, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Yugoslavia. Three members of the EFO's Economic Section, including Stoppani (the Director of the Economic Section) attended. Japan attended as an emigration country.

The incentive for Central and South American governments to support the Migration Conference is unclear since they accepted few European migrants in subsequent years. It might have been motivated by a desire to protect migrants from their own states who headed to North America. On the other hand, the incentive for Central and Eastern European countries is easier to identify: the threat of Germany. Mazurkiewicz, the Polish delegate and a former Polish Minister in Argentina, declared to the conference how 'over-populated' countries were 'forced to settle their economic difficulties by emigration', a message similar to that conveyed by his government's delegate to the ILO's Governing Body, Titus Komarnicki, at its 78th Session in February 1937.

[85] ILOA, E 1001, Consultation with governments on a proposal to hold a Conference of Experts on Migration with a View to Settlement, 1937, Bandeira de Mello to Tixier, 18 Mar. 1937, 25 Mar. 1937; Waelbroeck to Oldini 27 Apr. 1937.

[86] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Technical and Financial International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement: Technical Conference of Experts*, Studies and Reports, Series O (Migration), No. 7 (Geneva 1938), pp. 3-6, 9.

Komarnicki stated that 'no one would be surprised' at the Polish government's attitude that migration needed to be considered in an international context and that he wanted to see 'practical results'. The Poles were desperate for countries to open up their borders to new migrants and relieve the pressure on European unemployment because they feared Nazi Germany's call for 'living space' would herald an invasion of Poland.

The ILO produced an introductory report on migration and settlement to prepare the ground for the experts attending the conference. This was published, along with the speeches by national delegates, the Migration Conference report, and its conclusion (which included multiple measures to facilitate improvements to all areas of the migration and settlement processes), in *Technical and Financial International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*.[87] The preparatory report was an important document, and discussed in detail below, as the ILO explicitly outlined its philosophy towards international migration for agricultural labour, why states should recommence migration, and its suggestions aimed at overcoming the obstacles that had restricted migration movements since the First World War. What it did not do was to offer specific recommendations or assess potential destinations.

The ILO stated that by the mid-1930s it was in a position to take up the question of land settlement for agricultural development since a number of governments of immigration countries, in addition to Argentina (through its request to the ILC in 1933 and 1934), had indicated that they were increasingly inclined to allow migration movements to resume. Economic conditions had generally improved, most notably in agriculture on which the Central and South American economies so heavily depended. They were not booming but the impact of the rise in agricultural prices was nonetheless substantial as agricultural products in most South American countries were

[87] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 3-6, 97.

cash crops for the export market. In Brazil, it was coffee, cotton, and sugar cane; in Argentina, it was pastoral farming and wheat. Deflation had been the Depression's most decisive contribution to these agricultural economies. In Argentina, the volume of its exports during 1931-3 was virtually unchanged from the preceding fifteen years but the decline in money terms was incredible; the value of its exports fell from 1,250 million gold pesos to 567 million gold pesos, that it would have been at the average prices for the earlier period.[88] This was a remarkable burden to bear for a country that had to import virtually all of its energy requirements and most of its manufactured goods. The ILO also reported that Central and South American countries had come to realize once again the potentially positive contribution that immigration offered to their economic development.[89] This persuaded the ILO to press for a 'substantial revival of migration' and to suggest that a 'new impetus in migration and settlement movements' could be possible.[90]

That being said, the ILO conceded that national sovereignty was sacrosanct. The decision to allow migration depended unquestionably on national policies: 'the fundamental principle on which...[migration]...should be founded is, of course, the full respect for the sovereign rights of the emigration and immigration states in regulating migration currents according to their own interests'.[91] These were 'the affair of the states concerned', which could be economically, politically, socially, or racially motivated, and so it followed that international cooperation on migration could only commence when states believed that not only did migration not harm their prospects but could even help to fulfil their economic, political, or social objectives. Unsurprisingly, the ILO hailed the decision of the eighteen countries to attend the conference as

[88] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, Siewers, 'Openings for Settlers in Argentina', p. 458.
[89] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 133-4.
[90] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 67, 82.
[91] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 133-4.

evidence that they now viewed migration more positively and that they were ready 'to promote, amongst themselves, migration movements of settlers'.[92]

The emphasis that the ILO placed on the issue of national sovereignty was an important point. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Rosental's argument was that the ILO's 'politicization' of and promotion of migration to ease population tensions were appropriated and conjoined with the idea of optimum population by certain states to prove 'scientifically' that over-population existed.[93] Placed alongside the ILO's challenge to national sovereignty during the interwar period with its global pretensions and claims of 'supranational authority', Rosental contended that the ILO therefore inadvertently legitimized the territorial expansion by force of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Thomas and others at the ILO had certainly argued that emigration countries were burdened with problems of 'agricultural over-population' and had called for a 'more balanced distribution of population'. It was also true that Thomas's address to the World Population Conference in 1927, to which he had been invited by Margaret Sanger, the famous birth control activist, questioned whether it was time for a 'supranational authority which would regulate the distribution of population' to overcome the nationalistic policies of population control.

Nonetheless, there are several reasons why Rosental's view is overstated. It is unclear why Thomas spoke out so controversially at the World Population Conference as he was not normally known to challenge national sovereignty, in public or in private. For sure, he was often exasperated by governments invoking national interests but that was a long way from advocating a supranational authority. Perhaps he was inspired to the more controversial position as he had attended as an individual and not as the Director of the ILO. Drummond, a practising Catholic, had insisted that the League's secretariat did not accept their invitations on the basis that it would

[92] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 6-7.
[93] Rosental, 'Géopolitique et Etat-providence', pp. 131-4.

be contentious and presumably he conferred that message to the ILO too.[94] Even so, since the ILO possessed no power to impose policies or even its ideals, Thomas knew that it would never be granted the power to control international migration. The ILO had also been unequivocal in its declaration over sovereignty; there was no question of migration becoming a 'right' even if the ILO believed it to be so. Moreover, Germany, Italy, and Japan largely ignored the League and ILO anyway and did not require or make use of the ILO's views on migration as a means by which to explain their foreign policy actions. The Axis powers' justification for foreign expansion was also condemned at the time as fallacious. The EFO's Economic Committee, which was invited to send representatives to the Migration Conference in Santiago in 1938, warned of the 'very uncertain and arbitrary' calculations and statements surrounding optimum population used at the time to justify autarky and territorial expansion. Rather it stressed the complexity of the issue which demanded expert examination, something which it, in collaboration with the ILO, had only just begun to investigate.[95] If any criticism can be levelled at the ILO it is that they were unable to persuade more immigration countries to join their quest in promoting international migration – note the absence from the conference of the racially motivated 'white' world Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and the USA – but this only serves to reinforce a sense of the constitutional limitations of the ILO.

The ILO believed that the best 'prospects' for immigration existed in 'Latin America'. Its reference to the region rather than to the individual countries once more belied a colonial outlook as well as a lack of clarity. The suggestion to transfer population without more precision implied that the region's resources could be taken advantage of rather than advocating an approach to deal

[94] Connelly, *Fatal Misconception*, pp. 68-71.
[95] LONA, R 4440/10A/34672/26525, Economic Committee, Study of Demographic Problems from the point of view of International Relations, June 1938.

with individual states on their own terms. Of course, the ILO hoped that as many countries as possible would open their borders because it knew that individually each one would only accept a limited number of new migrants but it is unlikely that the ILO would have referred to European countries in such a manner. Nonetheless, the conference delegates seemed unperturbed by the language employed and concurred with the ILO's view that migration had positive effects and that its 'great economic and social importance' would help to counteract 'economic disequilibrium' across the world.[96]

With countries willing, theoretically at least, to accept migrants the ILO's next task was to examine the institutional obstacles. Migration for settlement on land for agricultural development required significant, often 'complex' organization which, it was believed, could only be provided by an institution designed specifically for that purpose; that is, a settlement organization. Private settlement organizations with outright commercial motives existed but both the ILO and the conference delegates felt that these types of organizations were generally unsuited to the task. Agriculture was an industry that took many years to yield returns, as the chapter on nutrition will reveal, so significant investment in the settler was required on realistic terms. The profit motive encouraged private organizations to demand the highest possible price for land and they were reluctant to extend long-term finance as they did not wish to tie up their capital for long periods. By the twentieth century, good quality land was becoming scarcer as much of the best and easily accessible land had already been developed and thus more aid was required to enable settlers to become successful in their destination country. As such, any new settlements required substantial investment for which private organizations wanted to see a healthy return. Since migrants usually

[96] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 7-8, 69, 133.

arrived in a new country with limited or no assets they were unable to afford the price of land or the terms of finance demanded by speculative or commercial operators.[97]

Another major financial obstacle preventing a flow of new migrants was that the global economic and financial situation, even in the late 1930s, was still dire. Some emigration countries could not convert currency for those emigrants with assets, however small, who wanted to exchange the currency of their home country for that of their destination country. Some countries simply refused to do so, a position adopted by the German authorities towards its Jewish emigrants. Similarly, many immigration countries, also devoid of foreign currency, were unable or did not allow settlers to transfer savings that they accumulated and wished to send back home to their relatives.[98] To overcome the general problem of a lack of foreign exchange some governments concluded bilateral clearing agreements whereby goods were used to 'pay' for much-needed foreign currency. In an uncomfortable development the ILO was willing, not for the first time, to overlook Nazi Germany's malevolence and rather looked to it as a model, as a state that had concluded agreements of this nature selling industrial and manufactured goods so as to allow emigrants to transfer capital. While it recognized that these treaties were an inadequate long-term solution, both the ILO and the migration conference suggested that governments should examine the possibility of using the export of goods in exchange for the required foreign currency. The conference also considered the potential for third parties to provide the temporary financing of these foreign exchange payments including 'detailed' options for an 'international scheme for financing settlement' that would go beyond bilateral relations.[99]

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[97] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 10, 16-18.
[98] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 136-7.
[99] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 58-60, 134, 151.

A more positive role for state involvement was presented by both the ILO and conference participants as the best solution for financing an organization for international settlement. A state-run or state-endowed institution, they believed, afforded the greatest potential to offer the services and financing required to settle large numbers of migrants successfully. For the settler, the ILO's suggested solution included offering short-term loans for transport and other expenses whilst long-term mortgages could be offered to purchase land. To overcome the lack of working capital the official settlement organization could be financed by a state financial institution or the settlement organization could issue its own bonds directly backed with state guarantees. Either way, the state guarantee should afford the bonds credibility and therefore enable the settlement organization to acquire adequate funding. Bond issuance also offered flexibility in that it could allow the number of bonds issued to match the required number of settlers and it could ensure that settlement organizations were autonomous and adequately funded, which would also provide a sense of security for the settler.[100] The ILO recognized that some governments had struggled to find buyers for their own bonds due to concerns over their financial stability, so it suggested that the bonds could be issued in emigration countries as well as immigration countries thus allowing the settlement organizations to tap into the international capital markets. Like some of the more complex problems brought before the conference, the delegates made a recommendation to the ILO's Governing Body that the whole question of financing should come under the immediate attention of a new Permanent International Committee on Migration for Settlement under the auspices of the ILO (which, despite the ILO's efforts, had not been formed by the time war broke out).[101]

[100] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 52-4.
[101] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, p. 162.

State-run institutions were also active in migration settlement at that time but financing limitations had restricted their activities, too. Here, the ILO was once more seen promoting a colonial model. It revealed how the Australian and Canadian immigration services already administered most aspects of the land settlement process from the sale or lease of state land to full settlement schemes that involved recruiting settlers, preparing land, extending credit, and offering technical assistance.[102] The ILO believed that these state-run organizations had the potential to expand their operations and urged them to do so.

Suggestions for other areas of state involvement were discussed in detail at the Migration Conference and a series of recommendations were outlined. Some of the proposals were an extension of those already in operation including: the regular collection of data on the number of potential settlers and their technical qualifications; conditions of admission for settlement and transport; laws affecting settlement, location, and taxes; conditions to be expected in a new country; guidance on farming options and the price of land; and the 'types of settlers desired'. The last point served to indicate that states, whilst being open in principle to immigration, nonetheless wanted to police the process very closely. It was suggested that this information be sent regularly to the ILO to be accessed when required by other governments. Where state institutions did not already exist, the conference recommended that 'official, technical, financial, and other organizations' should be created. Moreover, this information should be shared with other states through 'permanent cooperation'.[103]

Regarding the actual settlement schemes, it was suggested that immigration countries look at the possibilities of contractually establishing the conditions for the preparation of the land, the

[102] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 12-15.
[103] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 156-9.

initial period of establishment of the settlers including potential employment on farms in order to assimilate the settler to 'agricultural practices, language, climate, and food', and the expenses likely to be incurred by all relevant parties. Further recommendations included: offering settlers help to reduce their costs by waiving visa and consular fees altogether; offering fiscal relief with 'holidays' or exemption granted for land and other taxes; subsidizing or even refunding all of the associated costs of transport; and subsidizing the preparation of land and equipment including tools. It was even suggested that enquiries should be made into the feasibility of paying unemployment benefit to immigrants.[104] The conference also instructed the ILO's Governing Body to promote the coordination of migration settlement activities and passed a resolution requesting that the Governing Body instruct the ILO to establish an information service on migration for settlement, which would be made available to interested countries, and to continue its research on settlement organizations.

The ILO's report on the conference's proceedings was a surprisingly optimistic account that was hopeful for a future in which international migration would resume, albeit with the caveat that many technical details needed to be investigated further. Numerous references were presented of the desire for national authorities to cooperate with each other and with the ILO in plans of migration for land settlement. However, the wider contextual issues of the late 1930s were hidden from the ILO's sanguine version of the conference. Here, national delegates' speeches were far more revealing. Whilst conference delegates praised the quality of the ILO's report, evinced the spirit of cooperation, and openly declared the 'potentialities' of migration, it was also notable that those same delegates drew attention to the gulf between theory and practice. Others revealed many of the more offensive aspects of 1930s politics. Enrique Ruiz-Guiñazú, Argentina's Envoy

[104] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 159-61.

Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Berne and its Permanent Delegate to the League, argued that, whilst his country was in favour of immigration, there existed no quantifiable way of measuring the capacity to absorb immigration. That capacity was undoubtedly affected by many factors but it ultimately rested on the needs of the individual country. Naturally, this fed into discussions of immigrant 'quality': Ruiz-Guiñazú noted that Argentina required 'only skilled workers and primarily agriculturalists'. D. Pinheiro Machada, the Director of the Federal Population Service in Chile, was much more explicit revealing that the 'healthy' foreigner was 'always welcome' but 'undesirable or unsuitable persons' were not.[105]

The categorization into the 'healthy', the 'undesirable', and the 'unsuitable' was not, of course, about health but redolent of much of the racial politics of the period. The Polish authorities also had to deny an accusation that their long-held wish to promote emigration was primarily based around a desire to encourage Jews to leave Poland. C. Parra Perez, Minister Plenipotentiary of Venezuela in Switzerland, stated what many openly thought at the time, that 'immigration countries have the right, I was almost going to say the duty, of choosing their future citizens'.[106] Parra Perez also explained that he thought immigration had been restricted during the interwar period because people were suspicious of foreign settlers in the belief that emigration countries wanted to 'influence' their former emigrants. He claimed that it was 'dangerous' and 'harmful' for a home country to attempt to manipulate its former residents who understandably had a strong connection to the country of their birth but who, if left to their own devices, might otherwise assimilate into the local population in the settler country.

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[105] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, pp. 91-3, 104-5.
[106] ILOA, International Labour Office, *International Co-operation with regard to Migration for Settlement*, p. 108.

It was clear that many obstacles of a political, economic, and cultural nature remained, which ensured that the progression towards a resumption of large-scale migration was not only unlikely but virtually impossible. This was reflected in the ILO's attempts to establish a Permanent International Committee on Migration for Settlement in the aftermath of the conference; only a limited number of respondents agreed to become permanent members of the committee and the committee had still not been appointed when war broke out.[107] The ILO's rather muddled approach to migration reflected the supreme difficulties it faced throughout the 1930s as it struggled to find strategies to help the many millions without work. The dismal economic situation was compounded in the latter part of the decade as migration became a hugely politicized issue with a Jewish population trying to escape from Germany and migrants flooding out of Spain. Faced with these problems the ILO's efforts can, in some ways, be seen as token efforts to promote its vision of internationalism in order to justify its existence. It was, after all, no match for the other internationalist forces of Nazism and Communism.

[107] ILOA, International Labour Office, Proceedings of the 25th Session of the International Labour Conference, Geneva, June 1939, pp. 624-37.

Chapter Four: Housing

This chapter, and the following chapter on nutrition, move away from the creation of and the search for work, and concentrate on the responses to the effects of unemployment on health and living conditions. Housing formed a crucial pillar of this approach, directed specifically towards working-class living conditions. It would be wrong to assume, however, that the League and ILO only considered housing in terms of health as it became clear to them that economic and financial aspects were important factors too. Affordability was identified as one of the major issues that prevented working-class families from being able to acquire good quality housing. Moreover, it was suggested that residential housebuilding could be brought under the banner of public works as a counter-cyclical policy to boost economic demand.

The first section of the chapter looks at the national context and housing policies as they developed at the local, municipal, and national level. Sections two and three move on to international developments and consider the studies conducted by the League and ILO during two stages: section two looks at the initial phase of programmes between 1932 and 1935; section three examines the broader and more technical investigations that followed under a LNHO Housing Commission that sat between 1936 and 1939. During these two phases of enquiry the LNHO invited both the ILO and EFO, as part of a multi-agency strategy, to apply their expertise to narrower elements of the study. From a historiographical perspective, there is a notable shift in this chapter from the previous two chapters as the drive for standardization in housing quality led to a focus on local, municipal, and national housing policies and the LNHO, in particular, began to search for 'models' that could be replicated in other conditions and climates.

Local, municipal, and national housing policies in the interwar period

Poor quality housing, as part of the broader problem of the dismal urban environment, became an increasing source of concern for public authorities and social reformers during the nineteenth century in countries that had experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization. Persistent outbreaks of disease, none more so than the cholera epidemics that ravaged city after city, caused anxiety about hygiene and focused attention on how to prevent the spread of disease and how and where to house workers. Some rich, philanthropic industrialists, including Robert Owen in New Lanark, Scotland in the first half of the nineteenth century and the Cadbury brothers in Bournville, Birmingham in the latter part of the century, constructed notable, good quality housing for their workers but these were few in number. Self-help social housing organizations also emerged in the nineteenth century such as those established by cooperatives which largely copied the utopian Owen model. With expanding electorates, however, states and municipalities were compelled to become ever more deeply involved in their citizens' lives as concerns over hygiene became conjoined with fears of social unrest. Laws were enacted that obliged local authorities to improve local infrastructure and upgrade sub-standard housing usually through the provision of (limited) subsidies. But even as municipalities began to clean up their urban centres and develop the surrounding infrastructure, most new housing – the tenement blocks in central Europe and the terraced houses in Belgium and Britain – were built with private means. These included employers, speculative landlords, or, in some cases, organizations specifically formed to offer cheap housing, for example, the *Société Française des Habitations à Bon Marché* founded in 1889 in France. As such, despite some notable improvements to the quality of housing leading up to the First World War the excessive cost of replacing condemned properties, the pressure on urban land for other uses e.g. railways and commercial enterprises, and, above all, the constant

stream of rural to urban migration, ensured that the quality of housing in most working-class districts remained poor and many slums survived as new, mostly pauperized, immigrants had no better options.[1]

The First World War proved to be a turning-point for central government involvement in housebuilding and the development of national housing policies. Belligerent nations had directed production, output, and materials entirely to the war effort with the result that housebuilding had virtually ceased. Combined with the destruction of property during the war, the introduction of rent controls, which disincentivized private investment by fixing the rate of return, and the overriding feeling that citizens required some sort of recompense for their war efforts, it was immediately clear to central governments after the conclusion of hostilities that there was a startling deficiency of housing. Nonetheless, the results of attempts to rectify long-term housing problems in the interwar period were decidedly mixed. In France, despite the *loi Bonnevay* of 1912, named after *Député* Laurent Bonnevay, which established the concept of public ownership of housing and allowed local authorities to establish associations to provide low-cost housing, the results were very disappointing. Not until 1928 did the French central government set any target for housebuilding when the *loi Loucheur* of 1928 aimed for the figure of 260,000 units over five years. That Act was named after Louis Loucheur, the industrialist who had been brought into the government to help bolster armaments production during the First World War and who later became an economic advisor, technocrat, and minister of state that championed economic reconstruction in the postwar period. Loucheur campaigned strongly to gain Senate approval for his plan and although he achieved a substantial increase in central government funding the

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[1] Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health*, p. 395; A. Power, *Hovels to High Rise: State Housing in Europe since 1850* (London, 1993), pp. 103, 170-5; C. Pooley (ed.), *Housing Strategies in Europe, 1880-1930* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 1-8; P. Malpass and A. Murie, *Housing Policy and Practice*, 5th edn (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 20-35.

Depression forced government spending cuts. As such, housing stock was again unable to keep up with demand as large-scale immigration from other European countries (as shown in the previous chapter) coupled with substantial internal rural-to-urban migration, proved to be too great a burden.[2]

In Germany, estimates suggested that up to two million homes were required immediately after the war. The Weimar government, alarmed at the prospect of left-wing revolution spreading, felt compelled to intervene as they did in other areas of social policy. It introduced large-scale subsidies to encourage new building projects which were paid for by a tax on existing property owners. Despite some success in producing new units of commendable quality and partly alleviating the housing shortage, the costs involved meant that rents were still beyond most working-class families. The economic collapse after 1929 caused construction to come to a virtual standstill as the annual subsidy collapsed from 1.34 billion marks in 1928 to 150 million marks in 1932.[3] After the Nazis gained power they set about tackling the housing shortage through two main devices. Although the government immediately cut direct subsidies and placed the onus back on to the private sector to fund housebuilding, it continued and extended Franz von Papen and Kurt von Schleicher's work creation schemes by pumping hundreds of millions of marks into the reconstruction and conversion of existing properties mainly into smaller units. Even more important was its guarantee for mortgage lenders against default. This brought down the cost of borrowing, which stimulated private investment in residential construction, and in turn helped associated industries to recover. Despite some improvements to quality and quantity, however,

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[2] S.D. Carls, *Louis Loucheur and the Shaping of Modern France, 1916-32* (Baton Rouge and London, 1993), pp. 276-82; Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health*, p. 395; Power, *Hovels to High Rise*, pp. 36-9.
[3] Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, pp. 157-8; H. James, *The German Slump: Politics and Economics 1924-1936* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 206-7.

Nazi Germany's promised ideal of 'people's housing' remained largely unfulfilled and a vision for the future.[4]

In Britain, government ministers, too, feared revolution after the First World War and the campaign to promise 'homes fit for heroes' epitomized the sense that the post-war era would be different. The Housing, Town Planning Act 1919 (the Addison Act) was named after the then Minister of Health, Dr Christopher Addison, and it offered direct central government funding to local authorities to build low-rent housing with a target of 500,000 homes to be built over five years. But, as the immediate post-war boom turned to slump in late 1920 the government reassessed its commitment. Government finances came under pressure and the spiralling costs of the Act's provisions caused Addison's replacement, Alfred Mond, to withdraw direct funding of the local authorities' housebuilding programmes in 1921. This did not fit well with Addison who publicly berated his former colleagues when new approvals under the 1919 Act were stopped.[5] A new Housing Act 1923 (the Chamberlain Act) was introduced by the Conservative government which offered small subsidies – £6 per house for twenty years – confirming the shift back to private enterprise. Although local authorities could also take advantage of the subsidies, 363,000 of the 438,000 homes built under the Act were private constructions. The subsidy was increased to £9 per house for forty years under the Labour Government's Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1924 (the Wheatley Act) which resulted in the construction of a further 500,000 homes by 1933. Further Acts of parliaments also followed that variously dealt with slum clearance: the Housing Act 1930 (Greenwood Act); and the Housing Act 1935, (the "Overcrowding Act"). However, despite these various schemes that were introduced during the interwar period, the volume of good quality, low-cost housing stock in Britain was still insufficient to overcome the housing shortage or to eradicate

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[4] Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, pp. 159-61.
[5] C. Addison, *The Betrayal of the Slums* (London, 1922).

the slums. The fact that so many Acts of Parliament were passed attempting to tackle the problems affecting working-class housing was perhaps one of the contributory factors behind British resistance to the LNHO's overtures on housing questions as they emerged during the 1930s.[6]

The major developments in national and municipal housing policies that emerged in the immediate aftermath of the First World War did not go unnoticed by senior figures at the ILO. The LNHO, on the other hand, really only became concerned about the effects of social conditions on health from 1932. Although the ILO had no specific mandate to investigate living conditions, or even to collect information concerning living conditions, Thomas and his colleagues wanted to bring housing, as part of a broader programme, under the ILO's umbrella. Trade unionist groups were understandably keen to seek improvements to their members' living conditions and supported any moves in this direction, but Thomas knew that he had to tread carefully and that bringing housing under the ILO's purview was no easy task. National sensitivities were piqued once more, which caused opponents to voice their disapproval – including some within the ILO community – when discussions about broadening the ILO's remit beyond working conditions were proposed. At a Governing Body session in 1922, when a suggestion for an ILO enquiry into housing was first muted, the British government representative and Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour Major Archibald Boyd-Carpenter argued vehemently against the idea, stating that he believed that housing was a national problem which should be addressed nationally. Thomas, however, had sensed an opportunity that could allow social conditions to be investigated by the ILO and pressed for its inclusion. The ILO had been invited, through Thomas, to cooperate in preparation for the latest congress, scheduled in Rome in September 1922, of the International Housing Congress, an international housing association of housing specialists and other interested

[6] Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health*, p. 395; Power, *Hovels to High Rise*, pp. 104-7, 179-82; J. Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815-1985* (London, 1986), pp. 231-4.

parties, which had met on numerous occasions over the previous two decades. The political turmoil in Italy caused the cancellation of the congress but Thomas proposed to the Governing Body that the ILO should continue the work that it had already begun for the congress. Whilst conceding that housing was a national issue he pointed out that the many previous meetings of the International Housing Congress confirmed that the eminent authorities in this field believed that the sharing of national experiences could be beneficial to others. If this had been realized pre-war then it was even more appropriate post-war, he stressed. It was both 'a labour question and an international question' as the housing problems that wage earners faced were virtually identical everywhere.[7] The workers' delegates strongly supported Thomas and stressed the importance of good quality, affordable housing for workers. A proposal was also made to establish a separate branch within the General Studies Service of the ILO' Office to deal with housing and welfare questions. The Governing Body evidently agreed with Thomas by approving the enquiry and creating the new post by transferring an individual from the Statistical Section. The decision confirmed that housing, and social conditions in general, were a legitimate subject of interest to the ILO.

The new position on housing was taken up by the Office member Hugo von Haan, an Austrian statistician, under the direction of Karl Pribram who was Head of the ILO's Statistical Section from 1921-28. Pribram had worked in the Austrian civil service, rising to Chief of the Legislative Division for Social Policy in the Ministry for Social Administration, before his employment in the ILO's secretariat. He had also previously attended the International Housing Congress as a representative of the Austrian Government and in 1910 he had been the Secretary of the organising committee when the congress took place in Vienna. The ILO's Governing Body authorized the ILO to conduct and publish a number of studies in the 1920s that concentrated on

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[7] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 17th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 2 Feb. 1923, pp. 148-9.

the processing and collection of information and action taken by public authorities at the national level and one which looked at the methodology of housing statistics in 1928.[8] Considering the ongoing problems of demand outstripping supply, the studies were notable for being remarkably complimentary of most national and municipal authorities' approach to housing in the 1920s and for not offering any specific ideas that could alleviate the housing problems that afflicted so many urban centres. Having created the new role, the ILO probably felt some pressure to adopt a conservative approach in this its first foray into the realm of living conditions. What is interesting, though, is that, despite the studies' shortcomings, the reports offer evidence of how the national/international dynamic was changing. Here was an international body overseeing national policies and for some – the British government representative Boyd-Carpenter was a perfect example – this was unacceptable. British ministers and officials had been supervising, managing, and administrating other populations and territories for over 150 years and found it difficult to come to accept that anyone should have the right to oversee British policy. The British were not alone but when it came to housing, they certainly seemed to be the most vocal.

A further telling development was the shift in scale of the report published in 1930, *Housing Policy in Europe: Cheap Home Building*. It was an impressive and detailed account of the national housing policies of thirteen countries: Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and Britain. The report is worth reviewing in some detail for it also offered some incisive observations, particularly regarding the importance of housing to health and its symbiotic relationship with the economy,

[8] ILOA, International Labour Office, *European Housing Problems since the War*, Studies and Reports, Series G (Housing and Welfare), No.1 (Geneva, 1924); International Labour Office, *The Housing Situation in the United States*, Studies and Reports, Series G (Housing and Welfare), No. 2 (Geneva, 1925); International Labour Office, *Housing Policy in Europe: Cheap Home Building*, Studies and Reports, Series G (Housing and Welfare), No. 3 (Geneva, 1930); International Labour Office, *Methods of Compiling Housing Statistics*, Studies and Reports, Series N (Statistics) No. 13 (Geneva, 1928).

themes that were to emerge as the centrepiece of the League's later investigations during the Depression. The ILO collaborated, as it had previously, with numerous experts covering a range of issues, including the origins of housing problems, post-war building difficulties, the extent of the housing need, and financing.

The report emphasized that housing problems were still evolving as governments continued to search for answers to solve the issues confronting them. The building industry, it argued, was a vital area of economic life and government intervention that could potentially stabilize economic activity, a clear indication of the evolution of the ILO's thinking on public works. It also noted the economic connections between countries and deduced that three groups had emerged since the end of the First World War. Currency depreciation and subsequent inflation had afflicted all states both during and after the war, but the relative impact was vastly different. In Britain and the 'neutral' countries, the Netherlands and Sweden, currencies had depreciated by about 30% but had recovered by 1925. In Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Czechoslovakia they had experienced more inflation and a slower recovery. But the last group of Austria, Germany and Poland had suffered hyperinflation and had stabilized, or in the case of Italy and France they had suffered high inflation but had taken longer to stabilize.[9]

In terms of health, the report stated, good quality housing, as well as food and clothing, were crucial to the well-being of workers but governments had not acted out of benevolence to improve housing conditions; rather, they had been compelled to take action. It noted the housing shortage and continued prevalence of slums after the war, largely due to urban migration which had led to serious overcrowding especially in central, eastern, and some parts of southern Europe.[10] The praise for many governments' efforts since the First World War was effusive. Britain and

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[9] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Housing Policy in Europe*, pp. 9-11.
[10] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Housing Policy in Europe*, pp. vi, 4, 25, 27.

Germany were singled out as 'two great states whose governments have pursued a particularly active housing policy' where the government-backed share of building work was 80%. The study commended the dramatic escalation in public authority building, which was virtually zero before the war: in Austria, the authorities managed an 'outstanding' achievement of a 73% increase between 1914 and 1928 although this was largely concentrated in Vienna; in the five largest towns in Norway the increase was 47% for the same period. In addition, in many countries housing societies, some of which were private and some semi-official, had been very active and contributed another 9-31%.[11]

Looking at the state of housing needs in 1929, the report stated that in Britain, the Netherlands, and Sweden the shortage of housing had virtually disappeared as governments had acted without delay, which in turn had prompted private enterprise to resume their activities. In Germany and Austria, 'energetic measures' had had a significant impact on reducing the shortage of housing, although they had yet to finish their programmes. The only countries that were cast in a negative light were Finland, where conditions remained poor despite a large-scale building programme, and Poland which was still suffering from severe economic problems but, unlike Germany and Austria, it had failed to overcome the crisis. The study's conclusion was remarkably upbeat, which was unfortunately timed, of course. In fact, it stated that post-war housing policies had been so successful in alleviating the shortage of urban housing that new problems had come to light, notably slums and rural housing. The development of public utility institutions, encouraged by governments, was another highly favourable outcome, which 'may have far-reaching social consequences' and offer 'social stability'. But, most of all, praise was reserved for public authorities, which had been 'largely responsible' for the significant improvements to the

[11] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Housing Policy in Europe*, p.38.

quality of accommodation, for residential building for the lowest income groups, and for spurring research into the building industry, which would, it was hoped, encourage large-scale units capable of building good quality units at low cost. Government policies had been an 'unquestioned success' and with only a few exceptions their aims had been achieved.

This success was a powerful argument for governments to continue their efforts in this sphere, the report adding that housing 'may become one of the most vital chapters of social policy'.[12] The 'may' is revealing in that although the ILO had identified crucial elements of housing, such as its importance to the economy and workers' health, it demonstrated that housing was still not a central tenet of the ILO's social agenda before the Great Depression. At the time of the report's publication in 1930, the ILO had dedicated its efforts to improving working conditions through the construction of a labour code and had concentrated on its role as a centre of intelligence-gathering, in which it had been remarkably successful, as evidenced by the feedback on *Compiling Housing Statistics*.

The fact that the ILO's Governing Body decided to conduct housing studies did not prevent housing policy or the wider question of the ILO's role from being contested. In 1928, the British workers' delegate Edward Poulton, Secretary of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives and a member of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, pressed the Governing Body to allow the ILO to pursue its studies in light of the effects of poor quality housing on the health of both adults and children. He had long been a supporter of the ILO's work on housing but, by bringing health into the equation, Poulton elicited a powerful response from the British employer delegate John Forbes Watson, Director of the British Employers' Confederation (and also a member of the ILO's Governing Body). Forbes Watson claimed that if housing was an issue of

[12] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Housing Policy in Europe*, pp.51-4, 56, 59.

public health then surely that was outside the ILO's competence and was rather within the remit of the League. Forbes Watson questioned the ILO's role many times during the interwar period stressing that he thought that the ILO should concern itself with the conditions of labour. Thomas, of course, was always ready to debate this, on this occasion reminding Forbes Watson that the Governing Body had previously discussed and accepted the ILO's competency on the health aspects of housing and housing conditions for workers in general. The ILO, therefore, \certainly had the jurisdiction to conduct its own investigations or, if it so wished, to collaborate with the League.[13]

British ministers and officials often complained about the LNHO's expanding purview too. In 1932, the LNHO established its interest on the relationship between housing and health when it published a preliminary study "The Economic Depression and Public Health"[14] in the *QBHO* that exposed the effects of unemployment. This ground-breaking study, which will be discussed in greater detail below (see p. 177), led to a series of investigations across a wide range of topics including the social, economic, and financial aspects of housing. During the discussion surrounding the broadening of the LNHO's housing enquiries later in 1932, the British representative George Buchanan asserted that the British government would be unwilling to conduct any enquiry along the lines proposed by the LNHO, and urged 'caution' that the Health Committee was trying 'to establish an international formula for national enquiries' that he thought was 'wrong'. The LNHO should undertake the 'more modest task of an intelligence department' and 'let the country choose the method of investigation to fit its own circumstances, and let the

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[13] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 42nd Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 6 Oct. 1928, p. 518.

[14] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'Economic Depression and Public Health', p. 428.

Health Section concern itself principally with drawing attention to any important national results, if such emerge.'[15]

Late in 1934, the argument over the LNHO's role and agenda setting surfaced again. By that time, the LNHO's enquiries had extended so far as to include a multitude of experts from different fields; as a consequence, the LNHO suggested that governments should establish national housing committees. The British declined that invitation so Rajchman approached a housing expert Alfred Pike to undertake the enquiry. Pike was Secretary of The Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, formerly the Garden City Association that had been formed by Ebenezer Howard in 1899. Howard, of course, was the pioneer whose publication, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* in 1898, was adopted as the blueprint for the development of garden cities. In December 1934, just days after he had agreed to conduct the enquiry, Pike was informed by a journalist friend that people had begun to criticize the scope of the LNHO's investigation. Pike relayed this information to Rajchman, who was understandably disturbed and revealed that only a handful of people in Britain even knew about the study: Edward Hilton Young, the Minister of Health; Sir George Newman, the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health; Professor Wilson Jameson, the Dean of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; as well as Hugh Cumming, Buchanan, and Pike.[16] Evidently, someone in a position of authority had sought to undermine the LNHO's work before it had even begun.

The British government occasionally voiced their discontent with the LNHO publicly. During a Council session in January 1935, the Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden pointed out that his understanding was that the LNHO's housing studies were to be 'no more than the compilation

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[15] LONA, R 6041/8A/2242/549, Note describing programme of studies adopted by the Health Committee, Oct. 1932; LONA, R 6041/8A/2249/549, Draft agenda for Conference of Experts, Dec. 1932.
[16] LONA, R 6116/8A/15026/13812, Pike to Rajchman, 21 Dec. 1934; Rajchman to Pike, 28 Dec. 1934.

of a body of factual and statistical information', including details on actual housing practices to which recourse might be had by governments requiring information. The Rapporteur, attempting to defuse the tension, agreed with Eden but noted that a decision at the Assembly of October 1934 had actually instructed the LNHO to conduct an enquiry. Moreover, a number of countries including France, Italy, Poland, Sweden, and the USSR had by that time already communicated with the LNHO regarding housing policies and were in the process of producing memoranda for publication at home and for the Health Committee.

Rajchman wanted to ensure that the knowledge that the national housing committees were accumulating was going to be put to good use, despite the different conditions that each experienced, and thought that a regular exchange of information and experience would be of benefit to all. This was a constant theme with Rajchman and the LNHO, who stressed the importance of international collaboration as a means to debate and identify the most successful practices that could then be replicated elsewhere. Rajchman suggested a meeting in May 1935 to discuss the national reports compiled by the various bodies with experts from Britain, France, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. London was Rajchman's desired venue.[17]

The Foreign Office's reply to Rajchman was curt, asserting that it did not see how the British government could 'contribute further' than the report on housing that it had already supplied and that it saw no value in the conference that Rajchman had suggested. But, it conceded that the conference may be of use to others so the Foreign Office agreed to hold it in London anyway. The Minister of Health, Hilton Young, noted that the agenda's first item was to discuss the reports of the national committees, but he was quick to point out that 'no such committee' existed in Britain. After the conference, which Rajchman considered a success, he asked for the

[17] LONA, R 6116/8A/13812/13812, "Study of the Hygienic Principles of the Housing Policy of Various Countries", 6 Dec. 1934; Rajchman to Young, 14 Dec. 1934; Rajchman to Young, 9 May 1935.

Ministry of Health to provide feedback on the LNHO's forthcoming memorandum on aspects of international housing, although acknowledging that the information already supplied by the British government fulfilled the previous undertakings made by Eden at the Assembly in October 1934. The reply was again terse. H. Francis, Director of Housing, Slum Clearance and Town Planning at the Ministry of Health, declared that the British government 'had already made their contribution to the series of limited enquiries' and reiterated that they were 'in no way committed to the view that there should be an international report on housing' or, if there was, what Britain's contribution should be. He even expressed doubt as to what value British experiences would be for others and although they were always happy to learn from others British policy was already established by means of a detailed enquiry previously conducted and would not be reassessed.[18]

The inconsistency of their position may have been lost on the British authorities – willing to acquire knowledge from others but reluctant to share it in return – or perhaps they were just disinclined to offer anything to potential enemies in the febrile mid-1930s. Rajchman persevered and continued to press the British authorities to participate fully in the housing enquiries. After all, he recognized that Britain had directed attention to housing problems in the interwar period. Rajchman explained to Professor Charles Winslow, Professor of Hygiene at the School of Medicine at Yale University, and a major figure in public health circles in the USA in this period, that the British government was 'practically focusing its legislative activity on the question of housing this year [1935]'. Other countries had too, of course – in Sweden, 'very detailed statistical, social, and technical studies' on the back of legislation had been put into effect – which showed, Rajchman said, that housing was receiving 'special attention from public health authorities'.[19] He

[18] LONA, R 6116/ 8A/13812/13812, Rajchman (for the Secretary-General) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office, London, 21 Mar. 1935; Foreign Office to Rajchman, 3 Apr. 1935; Young to Rajchman, 9 May 1935; Rajchman to Young, 20 May 1935; Francis to Olsen, 31 May 1935.
[19] LONA, R 6116/8A/13812/13812, Rajchman to Winslow, 7 June 1935.

wanted to take the lessons learned and apply them more broadly. He also felt that whilst countries had started to address the quantitative and qualitative problems of housing, he believed that a lot more could be done.

National governments were not the only parties interested in housing, of course; in fact, they were newcomers to the field. The LNHO and ILO were therefore keen to establish contact with a broad range of individuals, voluntary groups, local and municipal authorities, and international housing associations. It was they who had been the pioneers in the pre-war period. As knowledge of the ILO's concern in housing grew and its role as a global depository of information became more widespread, it began to receive a variety of material. Two flagship housing projects in Britain, the Cadbury brothers' Bourneville Housing and the Pilgrim Trust's survey on the Becontree Housing Estate in East London, were just two of the examples sent to the ILO for their perusal.

But the ILO's most enduring and fruitful partnerships were with international housing associations. Recent scholarship has revealed how many of the connections between the ILO and these groups were forged pre-war through municipal, socialist, and other reformist networks.[20] The associations had been crucial for the development of new policies and ideas in the municipal and urban context for they had they had recognized that many of those living and working within cities were experiencing similar social problems. Thus, they had shared a vast array of knowledge in the

[20] Pierre-Yves Saunier, 'Taking up the Bet on Connections: A Municipal Contribution', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Nov. 2002), pp. 507-27; Pierre-Yves Saunier and S. Ewen, *Another Global City: Historical Explorations into the Transnational Movement, 1850-2000* (New York and Basingstoke, 2008); Pierre-Yves Saunier, 'Borderline work: International Labour Organization's explorations onto the housing scene until 1940', in M. van der Linden & J. van Daele (eds.), *ILO histories: essays on the International Labour Organization and its impact on the world during the twentieth century* (Berne and New York, 2010), pp. 197-221; O. Gaspari, 'Cities against States? Hopes, Dreams and Shortcomings of the European Municipal Movement, 1900–1960', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Nov. 2002), pp. 597-621; P. Dogliani, 'European Municipalism in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: the Socialist Network', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 11, No. 4, (Nov. 2002), pp. 573-96.

hope of learning lessons from others' experiences.[21] The pre-war networks were also a vital supply of personnel for the ILO with many of the ILO's secretariat emerging through them. In the housing field, for instance, the Hungarian Imre Ferenczi was employed by the ILO having been a figure involved in municipal housing in pre-war Budapest and as a standing member of the Permanent Committee of the International Housing Congress. The relationships between the ILO and housing associations endured throughout the interwar period and proved to be important for all parties involved. All saw advantages in utilizing the other's expertise and used each other to push their own agendas. What gave the ILO (and the League) extra gravitas, however, was the access to senior government figures that non-governmental organizations, even international ones, were unable to reach. As the League and ILO developed as centres of expertise other institutions used them as much as the League and ILO tapped into the non-governmental organizations' knowledge.[22]

One such organization was the International Union of Local Authorities (or International Union of Cities). Its Secretary-General, from its formation in 1913 to 1948, was Emile Vinck. He was a lawyer, a member of the Belgian socialist party, town councillor for Ixelles from 1904, a senator in the Belgian parliament from 1912, and president of the Belgian Senate in 1932. He was also president of the Société Nationale Belge des Logements de Bon Marché (Belgian National Society for Affordable Housing), which he had founded in 1920 and directed for 30 years, he sat on the board of the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning, and he founded and edited a number of municipal journals. Vinck and Thomas were well acquainted from the pre-war period through their socialist connections. Representatives from both the International Union of Local Authorities and the ILO attended each other's conferences whenever possible, they

[21] Saunier and Ewen, *Another Global City*, 2008, p. 9.
[22] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, p. 15.

exchanged information and feedback on various matters, and they cooperated on the preparation of a series of statistical studies from 1925, including the conditions of work of municipal workers, unemployment, industrial health, workers' spare time, and housing. The collaboration on housing was conducted as part of the ILO's preparation for *Methods of Compiling Housing Statistics*. As a measure of the quality of the ILO's study, the International Union of Local Authorities hosted a meeting comprised of statisticians from municipalities who unanimously accepted the ILO's conclusions. The Union of Italian Cities also used the report as the foundation from which to restructure its municipal building and housing market statistics. Positive feedback to the ILO's work encouraged it to expand its reach yet further. It contacted administrators in national public authorities responsible for collating housing statistics directly, and called for a statisticians' conference to bring attention to their work and the importance of international comparability.[23] On this latter point they were stymied as national administrators were unable to come to agreement on the validity of their request, but the ILO were able to obtain statistical information of comparative value. This was crucial for both the ILO and the League as without the international dimension, the value of their work would have been diminished greatly.

A second organization with which the ILO maintained close relations was the International Housing Federation for Housing and Town Planning.[24] Ebenezer Howard was its President until his death in 1928. It is noteworthy that despite the British government's frequent reluctance to engage in international action, others, such as Howard, actively looked to reproduce models. The garden cities movement, like the other associations mentioned above, was also supported by

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[23] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 45th session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Geneva, 15 June 1929, The Director's Report, p. 382.

[24] Formed in 1913 it was initially known as the International Garden Cities and Town Planning Association. In 1926, it took over the functions of the *Comité Permanente des Congrès Internationaux des Habitations à bon marché* and in 1938, it merged with the *Internationaler Verbund für Wohnungswesen* and thereafter had its headquarters in Brussels.

transnational networks and led to the construction of a number of garden cities: Copenhagen, Trondheim, Hilversum, Nuremberg, and, in the USA, Mariemont, Kohler Village, and Radburn.[25] The ILO's relationship with the International Housing Federation dated from 1921 when it started to receive the federation's periodical in exchange for the *International Labour Review* (the ILO, like the League, had to operate within a restrictive budget so it was often compelled to negotiate such terms). In 1923, the ILO asked the Federation for a report on its conference of that year in return offering the ILO's services on labour or industrial matters. The following year Butler, the Deputy Director at the time, invited the Federation to the ILC and the ILO also began to send representatives to the Federation's annual congress. The ILO certainly attached importance to these well-attended occasions – a truly international affair that usually attracted several hundred delegates from municipalities and other national housing associations – as extensive, well-documented reports were produced by the ILO member in attendance. However, it was noted within these reports that, despite the congress's interesting material in areas like town planning, housing for the poor, and rural housing, the International Housing Federation lacked the ability to transfer their work from the national to the international arena. This was where the ILO, and the LNHO, had a significant advantage because the international dimension was built into their fabric; they had multiple government ministers sitting around conference tables and in meeting rooms on a regular basis.

The ILO also maintained contacts with the national branches of the international organizations. In 1925, Georges Benoit-Levy, the Director of the French Association of Garden Cities, was invited to give an address to the ILO on garden cities. The ILO's internal memo of that

[25] LONA, R 6116/8A/15026/13812, "The Place of Garden Cities in National Policy", Ebenezer Howard Memorial Lecture delivered by the Rt Hon. The Earl of Lytton, 14 Feb. 1934, Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, leaflet No. 16. pp. 6-7.

meeting presented a glowing picture of Benoit-Levy's lecture and the advantages of garden cities; with planning, they brought 'order instead of disorder', space and leisure opportunities, and death rates and infant mortality showed significant declines. Thereafter, information was exchanged on a regular basis with Benoit-Levy, who often communicated with Thomas directly. Benoit-Levy once wrote to Thomas after he had heard that Thomas had proposed a conference on creating an international motorway network, something which Benoit-Levy had supported for some time. Benoit-Levy encouraged Thomas's involvement saying that governments were ready to listen to 'a man of action', like Thomas.[26]

Thomas also expected the local correspondent offices to gather up-to-date information, which they had to send back in a monthly report to headquarters in Geneva, detailing local and national political, economic, and social developments. Interestingly, the largest section of the reports was that detailing media coverage of the ILO, a mark of the importance that Thomas attached to the perception of the ILO. Thomas also encouraged the Geneva staff to experience the most current conditions 'on the ground' by conducting overseas missions, something which the League practised very little. In the realm of housing, Thomas inspected housing projects first-hand on a trip to the Baltic states and Scandinavia in 1927. In Oslo, he highlighted the impressive efforts of the city in dealing with severe housing problems, where the authorities had incorporated parks and open spaces in the city to improve the environment for all including, of course, workers. In Estonia, however, he described housing conditions as deplorable. That being said, Thomas made the critical observation of the importance of economic and financial conditions to housing. Pointing to the startlingly high interest rates of 15-17% that the Estonian authorities had to pay to

[26] ILOA, W 8/1/1/22/1, Internal ILO memo, 1925; Benoit-Levy to Thomas, 22 Aug. 1928; Benoit-Levy to Thomas, 26 Dec. 1931; Benoit-Levy to Thomas, 26 Dec. 1931.

borrow money, he accepted that their ability to build new housing was extremely limited.[27] It highlighted the severe problems afflicting large parts of Europe, particularly eastern and southern Europe, and certain regions' vulnerability to the future shock of the Great Depression. The episode also served to reinforce Thomas's belief in the inextricable link between the economic and social spheres. However, for all the ILO's interesting observations it was through the unlikely route – for the ILO, at least – of rural hygiene that the first steps towards a major housing enquiry was taken.

An international housing agenda: the LNHO 1932-5

Rural hygiene, which developed into one of the LNHO's large-scale interdisciplinary projects, arose out of concerns about rural health provision and sanitary conditions. But despite the fact that the majority of Europe's population in the interwar period still lived in rural communities (the programme was initially directed only towards Europe), and that agricultural prices had already began to fall from the mid-1920s,[28] it was not until the Depression really began to take hold in 1930 that the question came on to the League Assembly's agenda.[29] Rural hygiene was a collaborative programme involving the LNHO, ILO, the IIA, and outside experts who investigated a multitude of problems affecting rural populations that resulted in two conferences: the "European Conference on Rural Hygiene" held in 1931 and the "Far Eastern Inter-Governmental Conference on Rural Hygiene" in Bandoeng, Dutch East Indies in 1937. The latter was the result of a sustained effort by Indian and Chinese representatives at the League to encourage the LNHO to expand the investigations into rural hygiene beyond Europe.

[27] ILOA, International Labour Office, Minutes of the 37th Session of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, Berlin, Oct. 1927, Notes on the Director's visit to Czechoslovakia and visit to the Scandinavian and Baltic countries, pp. 459, 462.
[28] Clavin, *Great Depression*, pp. 78-81.
[29] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, pp. 325-9.

Housing was only one of a number of issues that appeared on the rural hygiene agenda at the European Conference. It came under the broader banner of sanitation alongside water supply, sewage, and the treatment of manure and garbage. Significant problems were identified and some solutions suggested, but these were general in character and they lacked detail as to how they could be applied in the unfavourable economic and financial climate of the early 1930s. The main problems identified were: overcrowding; inadequate toilet and sanitary facilities; damp due to location and construction; buildings that were too close to stables, manure, and other pollutants; and housing that had inadequate ventilation, lighting, and heating. Suggested methods to improve conditions included education, cheap credit and an improvement to the farmer's economic conditions, cooperation (e.g. cooperatives), and the 'proper enforcement of legislation, by-laws, and regulations'. The building of 'model' houses, model villages, and agricultural colonies would, it was thought, encourage 'imitation' although the European Conference's report noted that it was also important to take account of local customs and economic and social conditions to preserve local character. A further suggestion was to encourage industrial relocation to rural areas.[30]

The Conference's recommendations came to nothing, however, as the Depression gathered extra momentum during the summer banking crises of 1931 and the Mukden incident diverted attention elsewhere at the 1931 Assembly. Rural housing was not picked up again until late 1936 when Jacques Parisot informed the LNHO that the World Exposition of 1937 (in Paris) was to include 'construction and rural exploitation'. Sensing an excellent propaganda opportunity, the LNHO asked for and was granted permission for its own exhibition stand and then invited national governments to send in potential exhibits of farmhouses and other farm buildings. Many did so

[30] Bodleian Law Library, Oxford, O.LN per.1, League of Nations, European Conference on Rural Hygiene, Recommendations of the Conference, *League of Nations Official Journal*, 12th Year, No. 9 (Sep. 1931), p. 1896.

and the LNHO duly took their place at the Expo in the summer of 1937.[31] By this time, however, rural housing (as part of rural hygiene) had become subsumed into a far more substantial and focused housing enquiry.

The impetus for the more sustained and joined-up approach to housing came from the LNHO and again it was the Depression that was the catalyst. It is hard to disagree with Borowy's assessment that the LNHO had been slow to react to the Depression having refrained from even passing comment, at least publicly, on the effects of the crisis on health until the summer of 1932. Nonetheless, when it did it was a highly significant intervention that had far-reaching consequences. Authored by a long-serving member of the LNHO secretariat, the German Otto Olsen, "The Economic Depression and Public Health" was published in September 1932 in the *QBHO*. The LNHO's reasoning for initiating the enquiry was because it had become increasingly concerned about the anecdotal evidence of 'serious and extensive disturbances in social and economic life'.[32] The report was noteworthy for being the first time that the LNHO had outlined the potentially negative effects that poverty, caused by economic depression, had on health and, moreover, it was the first time that the LNHO had suggested publicly that it had a remit in the field of public health.[33] The report galvanized the LNHO, EFO, and ILO into action triggering a series of studies over several years on the economic and social conditions of health, most notably on housing and nutrition. The contrast of the language, approach, aims, and results of "The Economic Depression and Public Health" to what had preceded it was extraordinary. In short, with regards to housing, the LNHO, EFO, and ILO coordinated their efforts to find solutions to the diverse problems of providing cheap residential housing for the working classes.

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[31] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, pp. 344-6.
[32] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'Economic Depression and Public Health', p.428.
[33] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, pp. 361, 394.

As with many League initiatives, though, "The Economic Depression and Public Health" had more humble beginnings. It aimed, as the title suggested, to uncover health issues that had arisen during the Depression, but although it asked several national health authorities for recent data the report was itself a narrowly focused study that concentrated largely on conditions in Germany. In all likelihood, this was not a coincidence considering Germany's domestic economic and political situation. The report also admitted that the evidence of the effects of unemployment on health was mixed. General mortality, and perhaps more surprisingly, general morbidity had continued their long-term downward trend in most industrialized countries even when the figures were broken down by age. In fact, Cumming, summarizing developments in the USA, suggested that the Depression might have even had a positive effect on mortality and morbidity.[34] His response horrified those in the ILO and the LNHO concerned about workers' living conditions but, in some ways, it may have worked to spur the LNHO. In a crucial observation, in terms of the approach to health and social medicine, "The Economic Depression and Public Health" concluded that general mortality and morbidity statistics were imperfect ways to measure the state of a population's health and it argued for new methodologies, particularly around the physical impact on health due to unemployment.

Taking heed of Cumming's observations, the report nonetheless noted that there remained plenty of cause for concern to suggest that the Depression was having a detrimental effect on public health. Indeed, it attempted to make a very powerful case along these lines. Invoking the ILO's estimate that there were 20-25 million people unemployed across the world at the end of 1931, it stated that high levels of unemployment were 'one of the most alarming symptoms' of the crisis. But, the enquiry noted that unemployment statistics were also only part of the story; many more

[34] LONA, R 5926/8A/39675/3967, Report by Cumming, 7 Oct. 1932.

were only partially employed and therefore did not even register on the unemployment figures. Besides, in all cases the result was the same: sharply reduced incomes. This meant that the unemployed and partially employed were unable to provide themselves or their families with two of the most basic conditions of life: shelter and food.[35] Citing Germany as the example, the report stated that since 1927 incomes were down by more than 50%. Charities, savings, and pawning had all been used as means to overcome this decline but it was deemed unlikely that they could alleviate such a huge shortfall. Declining incomes had forced some families and friends to cohabitate, leading to overcrowding; in other cases, it had led to urban out-migration and the creation of self-constructed allotment colonies in suburban areas where people looked to return to self-sufficiency.[36]

The Health Committee's meeting in October 1932 sat to consider the findings of "The Economic Depression and Public Health", in addition to other fragmentary evidence that it had accumulated from health professionals and social workers. In terms of housing, further confirmation of deteriorating social conditions was provided as evidence that people had been exposed to 'improper social conditions such as overcrowding in hastily improvised colonies'. Many governments had actually encouraged urban out-migration – both Germany and Sweden were prominent examples – as a temporary solution, at least, to unemployment in city centres. But the Health Committee noted that the locations where such settlements had been erected were lacking in hygiene. It agreed with Rajchman's assessment that further investigation was required and agreed on a far broader enquiry, which became known as the "Repercussions of the Crisis on Public Health". The enquiry laid out a series of expansive studies: 'suitable statistical methods to

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[35] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'The Economic Depression', pp. 425-6, 444-58.
[36] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'The Economic Depression', pp. 425, 443, 447-8, 458, 469.

study the effects of the Depression; ways to study individual nutrition; ways to ensure healthy nutrition on a reduced income; ways to safeguard health by the coordination of the work of all available public and private health institutions; and the psychological effects of the depression.' Specifically, in terms of housing, it suggested, 'the effect upon public health of the migration of unemployed from the cities to place with inadequate sanitary provisions ("colonization")'.[37]

The studies were begun immediately, with varying degrees of success. Some results were disappointing: the psychological effects of the Depression did not even publish a final report despite the potential to expand on the work of, for instance, Durkheim.[38] Other studies, meanwhile, expanded and continued until the outbreak of the Second World War, including those on housing – although not directly related to 'colonization' – and nutrition. With housing, investigations into 'suburban' developments were published: in December 1933, "Suburban Settlements for the Unemployed in Germany"; and, in 1934, and "Reclamation of the Pontine Marshes" and "Stockholm Garden Settlements".[39] These were landmark initiatives of national governments but the value of the LNHO's reports was probably compromised because the national administrators who wrote the reports refrained from criticizing their own government's policies and instead concentrated on the various regulations that had been enacted to ensure that certain standards of accommodation were met. Moreover, the number of units built under these schemes was tiny compared to the numbers affected by unemployment or underemployment. In Germany, for example, the report stated that 26,000 allotments had been built with another 15,000 under construction.

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[37] LONA, R 5829/8A/40259/444, 19th Session of the Health Committee, 15 Oct. 1932.
[38] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, p. 364.
[39] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, F. Schmidt (Councillor in the Ministry of Labour), 'Suburban Settlements for the Unemployed in Germany', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization*, Geneva, Vol. II, No. 4 (Dec. 1933), pp. 600-19; A. Ilvento, 'Reclamation of the Pontine Marshes', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization*, Geneva, Vol. III, No. 2 (June 1934), pp. 157-201; C. Lindhagen, 'Stockholm Garden Settlements', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization,* Vol. III, No. 3 (Sep.1934), pp. 359-87.

Another new line of enquiry was to convene a conference of experts charged with finding ways 'to determine the most suitable methods of maintaining public health'. A select few health representatives from 'countries that possessed well-organized sanitary services' were brought together to produce a report, which was published in June 1933.[40] The LNHO kept the scope geographically narrow with limited objectives to review the influence of the depression, to formulate guidelines based on past experience, and to provide examples of its recommendations. The invited representatives came from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the USA, and Britain. No mention was made of the less developed areas of Europe or the rest of the world.

The inclusion of the USA is worth considering in more detail as a notable feature of the work of the LNHO was its relations with the USA, even though the USA never actually joined the League or even publicly acknowledged its collaboration. Recent research of the League of Nations has uncovered the many links between the USA and the League and ILO, which operated at many levels – both transnationally and internationally, although it was not always easy to differentiate between the transnational and international. Contacts with non-government organizations, including philanthropic institutions and university medical schools – hugely influential bodies in health research at the time – were frequent, with substantial sums of money supporting the League's technical work.[41] One such organization was the Milbank Memorial Fund. Established in 1905 by Elizabeth Milbank Anderson and Albert G. Milbank, the Fund's aim, through public and private partnerships, was to foster improvements in public health through the application of the latest research and experience.[42] Edgar Sydenstricker was a senior figure at both the Milbank Memorial Fund, rising to become its Director of Research before his untimely death in 1936, whilst

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[40] LONA, R 5866/8A/37494/1409, League of Nations, 'Report on the Best Methods of Safeguarding Public Health during the Depression', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization*, Geneva, Vol. II No. 2 (June 1933).
[41] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 36-7.
[42] See: http://www.milbank.org/about-the-fund/history accessed 19 May 2014.

also performing roles within government: he was Chief Statistician of the Public Health Service and he assisted the Roosevelt administration with the 1935 Social Security Act. Sydenstricker had a longstanding relationship with the LNHO having helped to establish its statistical service in the 1920s, and he continued to maintain close links. He even poached one of the LNHO's staff, Dr Frank Boudreau, another American who was number two to Rajchman at the LNHO. After Sydenstricker's death, Boudreau became chief executive of the Fund, a position Boudreau was to hold for the next twenty-five years.[43] Boudreau continued to support the LNHO's research with grants from the Milbank Fund.

As mentioned before, the relationship with the LNHO went all the way to the highest medical administrator in the USA. But, Cumming, who was a prominent force on the LNHO's Health Committee from 1923 until 1939, and the American authorities were able to distance themselves from the League with some calculated machinations. When the permanent Health Committee replaced the Provisional Committee that had sat since 1920, it established the Permanent Committee of the *Office international d'hygiène publique* (*OIHP*), based in Paris since 1907, as the Advisory Health Council of the LNHO's Health Committee. It was agreed that the *OIHP* would select Cumming as one of its ten appointments to the Health Committee.[44] Cumming's importance as a figure in the international medical scene was also evidenced by his term as President of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau from 1930 until 1947 and, for a period, as chairman of the *OIHP*.

The cooperation with the USA serves as an important marker of the achievements of the LNHO in setting global policy agendas. The USA did not officially recognize its

[43] See the Milbank Fund Centennial Report http://www.milbank.org/uploads/documents/centennialreport.pdf accessed 19 May 2014.
[44] Dubin, 'League of Nations Health Organization', pp. 56-61.

intergovernmental relationship with the League of Nations and yet its public health authorities commissioned studies and actions according to LNHO's recommendations. In 1933, Cumming asked the Milbank Memorial Fund to conduct an enquiry under the guise of the American Public Health Service 'into the prevalence of sickness and malnutrition and the changes in economic status and standards of living' amongst those known to be badly affected by unemployment. Sydenstricker led the team that conducted the investigation, "Health and the Depression" and in the report's introduction it declared that, 'it possesses added significance because it is coordinated with similar enquiries in several other countries under the auspices of the International Health Organization of the League of Nations'. The outline of the study was 'suggested by experts of, and in collaboration with, the League's Health Section.'[45] Sydenstricker had been instrumental in trying to persuade Cumming, and the group of experts appointed by Cumming, to work with Sydenstricker in order to ensure international comparability.

Furthermore, the LNHO's Housing Commission, established in January 1936 as part of the LNHO's enquiries (which will be examined in greater detail in the next section), encouraged the establishment of national housing committees. Cumming approved, as he saw it as a vehicle to cooperate directly with the LNHO's Housing Commission; in the Spring of 1936, the American Public Health Association sanctioned the "Committee on the Hygiene of Housing", as it became known, 'to serve as its permanent organ in the field of housing and to constitute a cooperating agency' with the LNHO.[46] The main protagonist supporting the establishment of the housing committee in the USA was Charles Winslow, who had also served as president of the League of Red Cross Societies and who was one of the most vocal supporters of Rajchman to head the LNHO

[45] LONA, R 6041/8A/6078/549, Note on collaboration with the United States.
[46] LONA, C.H./Comm. Hab./9(1), Organization, Composition and Terms of Reference of National Housing Committees, 31 May 1937; C.H./Comm. Hab./24, Notes on Housing Commission: Organization of National Housing Committees, USA Committee, 20 May 1937.

back in 1920.[47] Rajchman contacted Winslow again in the summer of 1935 at a time when the LNHO was expanding its housing studies. Rajchman praised Winslow's 'magnificent' work on the technical aspects of housing in the USA, and sought information from Winslow regarding other individuals or institutions who were involved in similar work and for recommendations to sit on a committee of experts. Rajchman also requested Winslow's opinion on the quality of the LNHO's proposed memorandum. Winslow confirmed that he was indeed 'deeply interested' in the LNHO's housing studies and that the memorandum was 'most exhaustive and admirable'. Winslow further offered to grant any help that was required and said that he would gladly welcome Rajchman's group to the USA later that year.[48]

As the example of the USA's relationship highlights, the LNHO established a wide network of contacts. But, if establishing direct dialogue with the public health departments of national governments was the LNHO's ultimate aim, obstructionist or merely uninterested governments compelled the LNHO to exploit other avenues too. This included utilizing diplomatic channels, particularly through those working in Geneva, as the speed and more importantly the cost of travel meant the secretariat's contact with national ministers and officials was much less frequent than with those government representatives based at the League or ILO.

The secretariat also called upon friends, former colleagues, and acquaintances wherever possible. At other times, they simply cold-called and approached experts directly. After reading an article by the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal on housing as part of social planning, Olsen wrote to Myrdal explaining how the LNHO was intrigued by his research, asked Myrdal if he could supply any further material, and if would be able to conduct an enquiry on aspects of Swedish

[47] Balińska, *For the Good of Humanity*, p. 49.
[48] LONA, R 6116/13812/13812, Rajchman to Winslow, 7 June 1935, Winslow to Rajchman, 15 July 1935, Rajchman to Winslow, 29 July 1935.

housing for the LNHO. Myrdal declined, but did make available a report that he and a colleague Uno Ahren had produced in which they had examined almost 7,000 families, specifically looking at overcrowding and future housing needs in Sweden.[49] Developments in Sweden during the 1930s with the Social Democrats expanding central government and establishing the welfare state were understandably fascinating to the LNHO.

A crucial move for the multi-agency approach, a broadening social agenda, and how health was being redefined was the LNHOs invitation to the ILO to study the social consequences of the Depression. The ILO was asked to report its initial findings to the conference of health experts held early in 1933. This was by no means the first occasion that they had cooperated on health issues but it was the first time that the LNHO had specifically directed the ILO to investigate living rather than working conditions. During the 1920s, collaboration had focused on industrial hygiene in areas such as the pollution of leather and water by the coal industry that began in 1925, and the Cancer Commission which sat from 1928 that investigated the frequency of cancers in industry. Both the LNHO and ILO also had the right of representation at their respective standing committee meetings where a common interest existed.[50]

After the LNHO had invited the ILO to cooperate on housing studies, the ILO, undoubtedly distressed by the human impact of the crisis, also reinitiated its own enquiries. What was immediately noticeable was the ILO's critical assessment of national governments' policies, far more than it had been in its previous reports. "Housing Problems and the Depression"[51], published

[49] LONA, R 6116/8A/13812/13812, Olsen to Myrdal, 19 Mar. 1935; Olsen to Myrdal, 10 Apr. 1935; Myrdal to Olsen, 27 Mar. 1935.
[50] LONA, R 6041/8A/549/549, Butler to Drummond, 6 Jan. 1933; ILOA, HY 200/0, Note on collaboration with the LNHO, 1 Apr. 1937.
[51] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, G. Méquet, 'Housing Problems and the Depression', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Feb. 1933), pp. 159-83.

in the *ILR* in February 1933 by Guy Méquet of the ILO's secretariat, did commend governments for the quantity of houses that had been built since the war – Italy had witnessed 'remarkable' results, in Hungary housing had been 'largely directed…for the poorer classes of the population', in Germany new dwellings reached an annual output of 318,000 in 1929 – but Méquet nonetheless criticized all countries for their shortcomings.[52] Much of his criticism was probably fuelled by the widespread reduction in the rate of building since the Depression began – in Germany in the early 1930s, housebuilding had fallen to one third of its 1929 level – which meant that there was still a vast shortage despite the post-war boom. In terms of quality, some progress was again perceptible in slum areas, but the Depression had since led to a situation where larger properties lay empty whilst many people were living in overcrowded or 'ramshackle' accommodation. Even governments which had focused on slums throughout the 1920s had fallen way short of expectations. Méquet concluded that results had been 'wholly inadequate'. In Belgium, a great deal of work had been carried out but large numbers of slums remained. In France, the *loi Loucheur* at first sight appeared to be positive but it was 'in reality nothing but a palliative'; it was estimated that another 500,000 homes required either reconditioning or replacement. Britain had made 'praiseworthy efforts', Méquet said, but left the criticism to Raymond Unwin, the famous architect and town planner. Unwin, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and whose many designs included the landmark housing developments of Letchworth Garden City and Hampstead Garden Suburb, proclaimed that the country was 'still disfigured by wretched slums'.[53] Méquet added that some countries had seen no improvement in quality or quantity which had led to a marked decline in the standard of living. Conditions were appalling in many cities in the USA, and in Greece and Yugoslavia the situation was even worse.

[52] Méquet, 'Housing Problems', pp. 168-70.
[53] Méquet, 'Housing Problems', p. 177.

The geographical range of Méquet's study was impressive for he included references to both India, which had 'problems of the highest importance', and to China where housing conditions could only be described as 'deplorable'.[54] That being said, the discussion of India and China was limited to just a few lines and the study itself was only a preliminary one. The language, however, was indistinguishable from the ILO's previous investigations as Méquet expressed dissatisfaction with all governments in one way or another. Moreover, he pointedly offered solutions in a fundamental shift of approach that envisaged housing, in addition to being a public health initiative, as a means to expand business activity and to provide employment. The main problem, as he saw it, was that with annual population increases, housing needs would continue to grow, which he estimated at 10-15 million dwellings over the next ten years. It was 'obvious' that this vast undertaking 'offers scope not only for national but also for international schemes, which may provide markets for large numbers of industries and workers'. Numerous national bodies already existed that were implementing schemes of cheap housing, but Méquet and the ILO were particularly interested in the international employment perspective. The building industry everywhere was operating way below capacity and was suffering higher unemployment rates compared to other industries, so an international labour exchange, as promoted by the ILO, could help redistribute workers to locations where they were needed. As optimistic as this view might have been – unemployment was clearly a universal problem and there was little reason to suspect that any country lacked a supply of labour – Méquet's international solutions did not rest there. Private enterprise, he said, had proven to be incapable of providing sufficient housing for lower income groups, so governments had come to accept the role of funding housing projects after the First World War, either directly or indirectly. Central government especially was able to access

[54] Méquet, 'Housing Problems', pp. 170-1, 174-7.

much greater capital resources than private means, and because of the nature of international money markets it was 'logical…to contemplate…international bodies to finance operations on a large scale', such as an international bank.[55] Méquet's tentative approach towards what later became known as international reconstruction proved to be a non-starter during the 1930s, as most national governments remained unconvinced of the benefits of, or were unwilling to, collaborate internationally. The parallels with what followed in the post-Second World War era are unmistakable, however. Above all, Méquet was not a lone voice at the ILO or the League in advocating such an approach; many similar ideas or proposals were presented.

One of those voices was the EFO. As described in chapter two, when the Depression broke the economic philosophy of the EFO's secretariat favoured classical laissez-faire liberalism but, surprised by the severity and persistence of the Depression, it began to consider new ideas and perspectives particularly around avoiding future depressions. But this was not purely from an economic and financial perspective for the EFO also started to link the economic with the social. As part of the broadening enquiries into housing problems, the LNHO asked the EFO in the summer of 1935 to produce a report on the economic and financial questions affecting housing. Jan van Walré de Bordes, a Dutch economist and a senior, long-serving member of the EFO's secretariat, conducted the study. The major problem, he outlined, was the lack of affordability. He proceeded to investigate how it could be overcome i.e. how to engineer cheap but decent housing for lower income groups, which went on to become one of the principal tenets of the League and the ILO's emerging programme to fight poverty.

De Bordes' report noted that prospective returns of investment in housing compared to other forms of private enterprise was very important to the level of investment. Investors wanted

[55] Méquet, 'Housing Problems', pp. 178-82.

to obtain the highest possible return i.e. to keep rents high, whereas tenants wanted the opposite, of course. In order to keep rents as low as possible, whilst still achieving a suitable return for investors, housing costs had to come down through reductions in tax, interest rates, or building costs. Since tax changes were a matter for local or central government, the report suggested that the best two methods to reduce costs were: firstly, to bring down building costs through modern technological methods of construction, large-scale building, standardization or large-scale assembly units; or, secondly, to reduce interest rates which would stimulate building activity as it made it more profitable to build houses, which could then be let at lower rents. It referred to developments in some countries – although not all – which had seen a notable recovery in building activity 1933-5, where long-term interest rates had fallen. In Britain, low interest rates since 1931 had eventually helped to ease the economic crisis from 1933. The yield on the Treasury's 2 ½% Consolidated Gilt fell from 4.39% in 1931 to 2.88% in 1935 and was accompanied by an almost doubling of building permits from 110,000 to 208,000. Italy also experienced a 100% increase in building activity after coming off the gold standard in 1934. In Germany, though, there was no correlation between interest rates and building activity. An additional development noted by de Bordes was that the authorities in many countries had intervened to reduce interest rates by providing capital at lower rates than would normally be obtainable, for instance, with the creation of semi-public organizations, which were supervised or guaranteed by the state e.g. the Crédit Foncier de France established in the mid-nineteenth century.

Dr Bordes' report also stated that the building industry was volatile with 'violent booms that alternate with almost complete stagnation'. This was 'economic waste' and he suggested that housing could, therefore, be a 'good' form of public works, a view that would have been scarcely believable from the EFO just a couple of years before. He observed that some public authorities

had encouraged housebuilding as a means to create employment and thought that it was certainly worth investigating further whether housing could be used to stimulate economic activity. Two factors, he believed, caused housing to be a 'good' public works policy. Firstly, it was a 'wage intensive' industry whereby a substantial part of the expenditure was on wages, which in turn were spent on consumption goods. Secondly, the margins in private housebuilding were tight and government intervention through e.g. small subsidies could possibly tip it into profitability.[56] De Bordes also pointed out another problem that required intervention by public authorities: slum clearance. The low-paid struggled to afford decent housing but private enterprise was unable or unwilling to take up slum clearance deeming it too expensive for the investment returns available. Local and municipal authorities in some countries – he cited Britain and the USA as examples – had concluded that it could not be done privately, so had begun to carry out improvements to slums themselves. In isolation, de Bordes' report could have served merely to highlight the intellectual rigour within the EFO, but when combined with the other evidence surrounding consideration of a new approach in economic policy and nutrition, it is verification that a notable shift in philosophy had taken place in the EFO by 1935.

In fact, from 1935 the EFO began to pay closer attention to building construction as part of broader economic trends. From December 1935, it started publishing statistics in the *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*[57] in connection with economic cycles, alongside which it sought to identify the 'statistical causes of fluctuations in building activity'.[58] Boudreau experienced the effects of building activity on employment and its economic value firsthand during a six-month mission to

[56] LONA, R 6117/8A/19622/13812, The Housing Problem: Some Financial and Economic Aspects, Note by de Bordes to Rajchman, 21 Aug. 1935; LONA, R 6116/8A/13812/13812, The Housing Problem: Some Financial and Economic Aspects, 5 Oct. 1935, C.H./Hab. Urb./3.
[57] The *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics* was one of a number of regular publications by the EIS (see Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, p. 36).
[58] ILOA, W 100/01/4/1, International Statistical Institute collaboration with the League of Nations and others, 22 Mar. 1938.

the USA during 1934-5. It was estimated that 3.5 million of the jobless in the USA were directly engaged in building construction, of which residential building contributed about 30%. In terms of value, residential building had suffered much more during the Depression than other industries, declining from an estimated $3 billion annually pre-Depression to only $300 million in 1933. Roosevelt's social concern for those living in squalor, alongside a desire to stimulate employment, was behind the National Housing Act 1934, a two-pronged measure which sought to protect homeowners from foreclosure by relieving their debt, whilst also increasing employment.[59]

While the LNHO had extended the breadth of the housing enquiries to the social and economic spheres through its cooperation with the EFO and ILO, it also began to collect documentary material of a specifically 'scientific and technical character' as it affected housing 'hygiene'. The concentration on 'modern' environmental conditions was striking. It demanded information on a diverse range of topics from noise to sanitary requirements to the freshness of air. It also began the process of trying to establish a Housing Commission to coordinate the enquiries, which was finally approved in January 1936, and in doing so it looked to expand its studies from a collection of fragmentary material on national housing issues to coordinated, large-scale monographs of national housing practices.[60]

By the time of the 1934 Assembly in October, the LNHO's efforts to broaden their study during that year had garnered support amongst many national authorities. The Danish, French, and Polish delegates insisted at the Assembly that housing problems required urgent consideration and backed the expansion of the LNHO's activities. With Assembly recognition, the LNHO consulted

[59] LONA, R 6117/8A/17901/13812, Housing in the USA, Chapter of Boudreau's Report of his Mission to the US, 7 May 1935.
[60] LONA, C.H./Comm. Hab./8, Note on Housing Commission's work, 10 May 1937.

a number of national government health ministers, including those of Britain, France, Poland, and the USA, on the framework of the its proposed housing studies. Although there was a suggestion to restrict the enquiry to urban questions in a select few European countries, ultimately the purview was broad: ‘to undertake…a general study of the housing problem and of town planning; to elucidate the problem areas; and to draw conclusions’. The scope was beyond the LNHO’s capabilities so it asked national experts to conduct the individual enquiries, although it directed and coordinated them, and centralized the information flow.[61] The experts included Alfred Pike (mentioned above p. 167) and Etienne Dennery, Professor at l’Ecole libre de sciences politiques in Paris. Dennery was an economic and demographic expert who had worked on the League’s Lytton Commission, which had investigated the Mukden incident, and later became a diplomat serving as French ambassador in Poland, Switzerland, and Japan. Other experts included engineers such as H. van der Kaa, the Inspector-general of Public Health, The Hague.

The LNHO opted to undertake one investigation for themselves; the aforementioned Boudreau mission to the USA (see p. 190). Developments under the Roosevelt administration had generated great interest in the LNHO so it despatched Boudreau in September 1934 for six months. His findings revealed that before 1933 the public authorities had largely ‘ignored good housing as an important element in promoting the health and welfare of the people’, and that private enterprise had overlooked the poorly paid. Only rich industrialists or philanthropic intervention had directed any attention to workers’ housing. Roosevelt, Boudreau declared, had changed everything. Deeply affected by the Depression, Roosevelt identified housing construction as a means of providing employment since it had suffered more than other industries. His administration introduced numerous measures, including legislation to prevent foreclosure through the National Housing Act

[61] LONA, R 6116/8A/13812/13812, Rajchman to Raczynski, 23 Oct. 1934; LONA, R 6116/8A/15026/13812, Report on the work of the Health Committee, October 1934, 6 Nov. 1934; Rajchman to Pike, 14 Dec. 1934.

of 1934 and to provide employment through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (later Works Progress Administration). Boudreau's assessment of federal agency action was extremely positive indicating that government intervention could be constructive. They were able 'to demonstrate the possibility of providing adequate housing for lower income groups at reasonable cost' under government supervision, and 'proved that it was possible to employ on this type of work large numbers of unemployed who were alleged to have had their working capacity destroyed by the dole'. The debate over the effectiveness of Roosevelt's actions was resurrected in the USA in the wake of the Obama administration's substantial fiscal stimulus through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Suffice to say that Boudreau believed that Roosevelt's policies had provided a 'great impetus for good housing' and it was 'probable that…1933 will mark the beginning of a distinct and far-reaching advance in the good housing movement'. The only doubt that Boudreau evinced was that housing was considered an economic, social, and political problem rather than one of hygiene. That being said, he revealed that basic services of running water, sewage treatment, heating, and ventilation were a given in the USA even for low-cost housing.[62]

The LNHO provided an extensive outline of its programme to the national experts. The "Study of the Hygienic Principles of the Housing Policy of Various Countries" included: future housing needs; reconditioning and reconstruction; public works aspects; national, regional, municipal, and private approaches; architecture; financing; sanitary requirements; exposure to heat, air, and light; and town planning which included open spaces, leisure, games and sports. The LNHO also suggested investigating the bodies responsible for housing policy; legislation; methods of town planning; building regulations; building schemes; land; construction including

[62] LONA, R 6117/8A/17901/13812, Boudreau to Rajchman: Chapter of Boudreau's Report on his mission to the US, 7 May 1935.

organization, standardization, materials used; agencies used for building; housing statistics; demographics; rents; supervision of dwellings; and economic statistics.[63]

While the national studies were being conducted during 1935, Rajchman was busy planning the next phase of the LNHO's own work. Believing that it was important for the Health Committee to understand the full complexities of the housing question and the interplay of the factors involved, he wanted as many of the national reports as possible, and the separate question of the economic and financial aspects, to be presented to the Health Committee before finalizing the details of this next stage: the LNHO's 'purely technical' study. The LNHO had meanwhile asked national authorities for information regarding the institutions involved in the research of construction, ventilation, heating, insolation, lighting, and for current methods, standards adopted, results, and outstanding problems.[64] The emphasis on science brought it into contact with numerous academics at institutions including Professor van Loghem of the Laboratorium voor Gezondheidsleer der Universiteit, Amsterdam, Professor von Gonzenbach de l'Ecole polytechnique de Zurich and Guy Crowden at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Crowden in turn discussed the LNHO's draft plan of study relating to health aspects of building with the Building Research Station, Britain's publicly controlled research institute established in 1926.[65] All expressed enthusiasm and interest in the LNHO's work and agreed that an international exchange of views was desirable. The LNHO's agenda setting also helped to push the boundaries of research as its demands for the latest scientific developments in housing prompted new research. Pike's investigations, for example, took him to lighting engineers to

[63] LONA, R 6116/8A/13812/13812, "Study of the Hygienic Principles of the Housing Policy of Various Countries", 6 Dec. 1934.

[64] LONA, R 6116/8A/13812/13812, Rajchman to Winslow, 7 June 1935; LONA, R 6116/8A/15026/13812, Rajchman to Secretary-General Avenol, 7 Dec. 1934; Pike to Olsen, 5 Apr. 1935; Note on Health Aspects of Housing by LNHO, 9 May 1935.

[65] LONA, R 6117/8A/18320/13812, Olsen to Loghem, 3 June 1935; Crowden to Olsen, 20 June 1935.

discuss standards of adequate lighting. His collaboration with bodies such as the Illuminating Engineers Society and the E.L.M.A. Lighting Service Bureau led Pike to reveal that he had suggested new areas of research to them, which according to Pike 'appealed to them very much'.[66]

The League's technical branches did not feel a duty to 'sell' themselves or their research and policy agendas in the same way that Thomas did for the ILO – which was certainly a missed opportunity by the League – but that did not stop their own occasional moments of self-congratulation. Rajchman felt that the LNHO should be credited for developing the housing programme and generating enhanced interest. The evidence suggests that there is much to substantiate Rajchman's claim that the LNHO had, in his own words, 'inspired' the national housing movement and the progression to a more coherent approach. After all, the LNHO had suggested the formation of national housing committees as the best means to collate and assess the wealth of information available from multiple experts in many different fields. National housing committees were established at the beginning of 1935 in France, Italy, and Poland; the Netherlands, USA and Czechoslovakia followed soon after, as did Britain and Spain, although they were not officially recognized as 'national' committees. The committees, which comprised architects, engineers, physicists, mathematicians, and health professionals, formed cooperative efforts to solve long-standing housing problems. The use of modern scientific research in building construction housing was nothing new – engineers, architects, and surveyors had long employed the latest research techniques and materials – but it was, as Rajchman declared, entirely novel that housing experts and health professionals collaborated: 'in most cases it is the first time that organizations ensuring coordination between the various technical and health activities have been set up in order to frame a common doctrine and to serve its practical application'. It is worth noting

[66] LONA, R 6116/8A/15026/13812, Pike to Olsen, 5 Apr. 1935.

again the LNHO's practical objectives. As with the EFO and 'practical economics', the LNHO's aim of collecting scientific and theoretical material, with an exchange of views and experiences, was to encourage authorities to incorporate the latest ideas and technology when formulating their own housing policies. Rajchman wanted to establish a 'definition of the principles of modern hygiene for urban and rural housing, national urban and rural planning…and place all of this material at the disposal of administrations and legislative bodies'.[67] In other words, the aim was for a series of international standards or recommendations for good quality, low cost housing.

The LNHO's Housing Commission, 1936-9

Rajchman's vision – that expressed privately in correspondence to Winslow[68] – was, he hoped, to be fulfilled through the creation of the LNHO's Housing Commission. Formed with the approval of the League's Council and the LNHO's Health Committee, the Housing Commission was established in January 1936 and was still sitting when the Second World War broke out. The Commission comprised several of the LNHO's closest associates. In addition to Winslow, there was: Professor Jameson, the Dean of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; Dr Axel Höjer, a physician and Director-General of the Swedish Public Health Service, 1935-52, during which time he passed many reforms in preventative social care and who later served on UN nutrition and housing commissions; and Professor Jacques Parisot, Professor of Hygiene at the Faculty Medicine in Nancy, who was a member of the LNHO's Health Committee from 1934 and its chair from 1937, and renowned as one of the key advocates of social medicine in France in the

[67] LONA, R 6116/8A/13812/13812, Rajchman to Winslow, 7 June 1935.
[68] LONA, R 6116/8A/13812/13812, Rajchman to Winslow, 7 June 1935; Rajchman to Winslow, 29 July 1935.

period.[69] The other members of the Commission were: Van der Kaa (the Dutch engineer); Dr Bruno Nowakowski, Professor at the State School of Hygiene in Warsaw; and Professor H. Pelc, Professor of Social Medicine at Charles IV University in Prague.

The initial programme was a series of comparative international studies encompassing 'different national, economic, financial, social and climatic conditions'. It was restricted to a small group of more developed countries – Poland being the only exception – as it was thought that these countries would provide information about the most advanced methods in use at that time, which would eventually, Rajchman hoped, enable a 'more general application'. At the same time, the LNHO appealed to 'tropical' countries to establish national housing committees so that the investigations could broaden beyond its urban, European and North American core. The LNHO and the Housing Commission understood that their knowledge of housing practices and policies was limited geographically and yet, despite repeated calls to non-European countries, Mexico remained the only country that established a national committee after the original seven outlined above (see p. 195). Whether this was a failure of how determinedly the LNHO and the Housing Commission pursued its non-core constituency is difficult to know, although housing notably formed an important subject on the agenda of the Inter-Governmental Conference on Rural Hygiene for Eastern Countries held in 1937.

The initial programme of investigation that Rajchman set out for the Housing Commission was extensive and ambitious. The enquiry was essentially broken up into the internal (A) and external environments of housing (B, C, and D):

A – The hygiene of the building and dwelling
1) human comfort and health
2) the quality of building materials from a hygiene point of view
3) the hygiene of heating and cooling

[69] L. Murard, 'Health Policy between the International and the Local: Jacques Parisot in Nancy and Geneva', in I. Borowy & W.D. Gruner, *Facing Illness in Troubled Times: Health in Europe in the Interwar Years, 1918-1939* (Frankfurt and Oxford, 2005), pp. 207-45.

4) the hygiene of ventilation
5) the hygiene of insolation and of natural and artificial lighting
B – The hygiene of city planning
1) density of population, layout, open spaces, parks, and playgrounds
2) smoke, air, and noise pollution
C – Types of urban and rural dwellings and achievements of town and rural development planning
D – Housing standards and regulations and housing inspection.[70]

With the broadening remit of the LNHO's enquiry to investigate the technical features of housing, the national committees that had been established in the wake of the LNHO's request for national housing policies during 1935 morphed into larger entities still. Some were remarkable for their breadth. The French committee, for instance, comprised representatives from several government departments and other official agencies including: the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Public Works, City of Paris, Higher National School of Fine Arts, National School of Highway and Bridge Engineering, Special School of Public Works, Polytechnic School, and National Conservatoire of Arts and Crafts. It also included multitudinous unofficial bodies such as the Town Planning Institute, Special School of Architecture, Technical Institute of Building and Public Works, Institute of Sanitary Technique and Industrial Hygiene, French Colonial Institute, Institute of Hygiene, Building and Public Works Laboratories, General Office for Building and Public Works, Cheap Dwellings Office, National Office for Scientific and Industrial Research, French Town Planning Agency, Society of French "Town Planning Specialists", Society of Government-certificated Architects, Central Society of Architects, Society for the Improvement of Lighting, National Building Federation, Association of Municipal Hygienists and Technicians, Association of Heating and Ventilation Engineers, Syndical Chamber for Heating and Air Conditioning, Trade Association for Sanitation, "Veritas" Bureau, and the "Securitas" Bureau. This large and seemingly unmanageable group was broken up into nine sub-committees: Human

[70] LONA, C.H./Com. Hab./1 Programme of Studies on Urban and Rural Housing, 18 Jan. 1936.

Health and Comfort; Quality of Materials from the Standpoint of Health; Anti-Noise and Vibration Campaign; Hygiene of Heating and Cooling; Hygiene of Insolation and Lighting; Study of Dust and Smoke; Town Planning in general; Housing and Town Planning in French Overseas Territories; and Standards and Regulations, Housing Inspection. That such a myriad of bodies was involved was confirmation that national committees had a willingness to cooperate and a commitment to investigate systematically the problems before them. As Olsen wrote in a note to Rajchman and presented to the Health Committee in May 1936, it showed 'without exaggeration that the value and timeliness of our enquiry has been generally recognized'.[71]

The direction of the studies was set largely by the Housing Commission, supported of course by the LNHO's secretariat, with research conducted by national institutions under the auspices of their respective housing committees. Following Rajchman's initial plan of enquiry, as laid out in January 1936, the national committees presented details of various institutes interested in the problems, provided accounts of the current state of research, prepared extended reports, and offered suggestions for future research to the Commission. The Commission in turn collated and assessed the mass of research at their disposal. It organized regular meetings of experts to discuss aspects of the study, provided agendas for those meetings, and produced detailed memoranda with formative recommendations both for the meetings and for updates for the Health Committee, Council, and Assembly. Where appropriate, further areas of investigation were proposed and as interest in the Commission grew, naturally the questions under review proliferated.

Only with an examination of some of the issues that the Commission tackled is it possible to appreciate the depth and sophistication of their investigations. Under Rajchman's initial plan of

[71] LONA, C.H/Comm. Hab./2, Note by Director on present work of the Commission, 27 Apr. 1936; C.H./Comm. Hab./3, Note by Olsen on progress of Commission's work, communicated to the Health Committee by Rajchman, 4 May 1936.

study each subgroup considered a variety of factors. The programme of study for housing's internal environment (group A, p. 197-8 above) looked at what can only be described as environmental factors that would still be considered 'modern': the temperature, purity, freshness, humidity, and movement of the air including the effects on air of heating, cooling, and ventilation; the temperature of the enclosure including walls, ceilings, floors, windows, and heating appliances; noise pollution; and natural and artificial lighting. One of the main objectives of housing, as outlined in an LNHO memorandum, was 'to protect the individual from climate discomforts, especially heat and cold', with the aim being to ensure that internal conditions 'establish equilibrium between the production and the loss of heat from the body, so as to keep its temperature normal'. To achieve this an array of scientific evidence was compiled including the instruments used to measure environmental conditions, the 'loss of heat by radiation, convection, and evaporation through the lungs and skin', and the various methods used to 'establish in diagrammatic form' the relative impact of those factors 'regulating the heat losses of the human body. All these were aimed at ascertaining the 'optimum environmental conditions governing bodily heat exchanges'. This last point was a crucial one for the standardization that the LNHO sought since it was deemed 'essential to establish a separate standard of comfort for every region'.

The geographic range and ambitions were also evident when considering the studies that looked at the influence of different building materials on the 'transmission and accumulation of heat'. Here, research of 'the coefficients of heat transmissions' had advanced so far that the thickness of a wall of a certain material could be accurately applied 'to provide the optimum conditions of comfort' for all climates. Indeed, many countries had introduced legislation to determine minimum building standards to that effect. In the Netherlands brick walls had to be 0.22m thick, in western Germany 0.25m, and in eastern Germany 0.45m. The implication for the

LNHO was again profound; standards could be applied to all climatic conditions although, once again, discussions about Asia (except Japan) and Africa were non-existent. The type of window was another vital factor contributing to heat loss – 5 1/2 times more heat was lost through a single pane of glass than through a brick wall of 0.38m. The importance of heat accumulation was also noted since cold walls absorbed an inordinate amount of heat. However, the problem could be surmounted with the use an interior insulation on the wall such as wood panelling. Heating systems were another subject under consideration. It was noted how the best heating methods depended on regional fuel supplies and cost, but local customs often persisted where, for example, in Britain open fireplaces had long been the preferred choice whereas hot water or hot air central heating were much more efficient. Cooling was not overlooked either. A study in the USA that recommended that all cheap dwellings should have a fridge ("fridgidaire") was looked upon very favourably by the LNHO as a simple means to improve health. The same investigation also revealed that the use of air-conditioning, although acknowledged as too expensive for personal use, was on the increase in enclosed spaces such as trains, restaurants, in certain industrial enterprises, and some authorities were also considering introducing air-conditioning systems into hospitals.[72]

Further factors influencing the internal environment were noise, ventilation, and lighting. With the rapidly increasing volume of road traffic, industry, and various other disturbances in urban locations, research into noise abatement considered the best ways to insulate a dwelling from internal and external noise. This included the thickness of exterior walls, doors, and windows; the materials used for, and thickness and insulation of, internal walls, flooring, and ceilings; and the

[72] LONA, C.H/Comm. Hab./4, Hygiene of Environmental Conditions, 8 Mar. 1936; C.H/Comm. Hab./6, Meeting of the Housing Commission: Draft Agenda, 8 Apr. 1937; C.H/Comm. Hab./7, The Hygiene of Environmental Conditions in the Dwelling: Meeting of Experts, 28 Apr. 1936.

insulation of ventilation shafts and water pipes.[73] Ventilation examined air space and air change to deduce the quantity and quality of air allowed per person. This was applicable to many different problems, from the increased use of gas heaters and cooking appliances that required constant air flow and extractor ducts, to the air supply within a classroom.[74] Issues surrounding lighting considered both artificial and natural light. Research institutes determined that sufficient lighting was important for physiological reasons in order to prevent health problems such as rickets and accidents in the home, but also for its psychological effects. Although it was considered inferior to natural light, it was obvious that minimum standards should apply to the provision of artificial light. This led to discussions about electric current, the number and appropriate position of electric outlets, wattages, the need to avoid glare and dark shadows (even to the point of advising on white ceilings to reflect the light and to prevent glare), and the level of intensity required for different environments, in the home and in the workplace. Natural light was a much broader issue and prompted examination of radiation, seasonal variations of insolation, the impact of different latitudes, the transmission of ultra-violet light through glazed windows, the appropriate size, position, and ratio of window size to floor area, and the orientation of windows (and by design the building) to the sky. It was also acknowledged that external factors had an important bearing on exposure to sunlight, especially smoke pollution in urban areas which significantly reduced insolation by up to 30% in some cases. It became obvious, therefore, that the internal and external environments were inextricably linked.[75]

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[73] LONA, Housing Commission, C.H/Comm. Hab./32, The Anti-Noise Campaign: Aide-mémoire by O. Olsen, 9 June 1937

[74] LONA, C.H/Comm. Hab./40(1), The Hygiene of Environmental Conditions in the Dwelling, 28 June 1937.

[75] LONA, C.H/Comm. Hab./52, Committee on the Hygiene of Housing (American Public Health Association): Lighting for Low-Cost Housing, 6 May 1938; C.H/Comm. Hab./53, Insolation and Methods of Evaluation under Different Latitudes by Tadée Nowakowski, Director of Construction Committee, Warsaw, 9 May 1938; C.H/Comm. Hab./60, Natural and Artificial Lighting of Buildings and Dwellings by R.J. Lythgoe, Medical Research Council, London, 4 June 1938; C.H/Comm. Hab./62, Report of the Sub-Committee on Insolation and Natural and Artificial Illumination in Relation to Housing and Town Planning, 29 June 1938.

Questions of housing's outdoor environment (Group B, p. 198) consisted of: air pollution; planning, zoning, and space, including density of population and recreation; drinking water, water supply, and river pollution; sewage disposal and treatment; and refuse collection and storage.[76] Air pollution was generally caused by smoke, coal dust, and toxic gases. The expansion of industry, the increase in road traffic, and the use of coal had led to poor air quality in many urban areas particularly those close to power stations, mines, and chemical industries. Methods of improvement involved soot interceptors, collective rather than individual heating, standards on maximum allowable volume of sulphur dioxide, sulphur trioxide, and carbon monoxide, and flues and ventilation in the home to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Research also continued to try to eliminate the emissions at source, that is, the effects of toxic gases. To overcome issues surrounding air quality, lack of sunlight, and overcrowding, combined with the research that confirmed that only small amounts of solar radiation penetrated indoors, planning came to the fore. Garden Cities became something of a panacea for the LNHO, but even if public authorities were unable to build new developments on a scale envisaged by Ebenezer Howard, it was nonetheless considered important to separate the 'residential from the industrial', for buildings to be an appropriate height, and for the density and size of developments to leave more 'space, sunshine, light, and fresh air of adequate quality'. For the mental and physical well-being of the individual, it was appropriate to follow the standards already set in some countries on the amount of space allocated for outdoor recreation in the form of gardens, parks, playing fields, sports grounds, swimming pools and workers' allotments. This extended to roof terraces and gardens where urban

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[76] LONA, C.H/Comm. Hab./4, Hygiene of Environmental Conditions, 8 Mar. 1936; C.H/Comm. Hab./6, Meeting of the Housing Commission: Draft Agenda, 8 Apr. 1937.

space was at a premium. Educating the public to explain the benefits of outdoor activities, as well as the hazards of over-exposure to the sun, was deemed essential.[77]

A fresh water supply was obviously crucial to health to prevent disease and for 'nutrition, individual and collective hygiene, agriculture, pisciculture, industry, navigation and recreation'. Inevitably, this led to questions of standards of quality, purity and pollution, and the effects of certain bacteria and chemicals. The need for high quality processes of collection, treating, distribution, and sound construction for housing the water were paramount. Closely related to water was sewage treatment where, again, the contribution as a vital factor to good health could not be overstated. The various issues considered were the different types of plant, treatments of the effluent, tanks (for industrial and personal waste), and filters. Another problem that affected health and hygiene was refuse, both in terms of collection and storage. Regular collection was the preferred outcome since it prevented disease and nuisance in residential areas from flies, vermin, bad smells, and dust, but this practice was by no means universal. As for treatment, it was obvious that the age-old practice of dumping on the outskirts of a town or village only shifted the problem to a different location. Discharge to the sea was to be avoided because of the environmental impact. The process of 'controlled tipping' had received much positive feedback, a system developed in England in the 1920s and subsequently introduced in other countries. Refuse was placed in shallow hollows approximately 2-3m deep and 15-20m long and then filled with earth within twenty-four hours. Fermentation then took place as the matter disintegrated but with no bad smells. Other more

[77] LONA, C.H/Comm. Hab./87, Town and Country Planning: aide-mémoire by O. Olsen, 16 June 1939; C.H/Comm. Hab./62, Report of the Sub-Committee on Insolation and Natural and Artificial Illumination in Relation to Housing and Town Planning, 29 June 1938; C.H/Comm. Hab./50, Combating the Flue Dust Nuisance in the Netherlands, 8 May 1938.

direct methods involved automatic grinders in a kitchen which reduced the waste to a pulp and allowed direct discharge into the sewage (still in usage in the USA today).[78]

The highly technical enquiries of the LNHO's Housing Commission stimulated further efforts at the national level. Research findings were disseminated as the importance of the message for good quality housing spread. Under the auspices of the French Ministry of Health, for instance, a 342-page report was published in 1937 entitled, "Housing in France: Conditions of Construction and Housing Development from its Technical, Sanitary and Legislative Aspects". In the USA, the Committee on the Hygiene of Housing (the national housing committee established at Sydenstricker's urging) published a report "Basic Principles of Healthful Housing" in the American Journal of Public Health in March 1938. The document was widely distributed to numerous public bodies, including those involved in health, housing, planning, research, and education. Federal officials encouraged the authors of this report to use the research as a guide for their development programmes and suggested that the report and other material should be circulated to all leading official and unofficial housing agencies. Thereafter many public health officials in the USA approached the Committee on the Hygiene of Housing for ideas of assessment, reconditioning, and demolition of slums. In fact, the committee was 'inundated' with requests. It addressed many interested health and housing groups, including the presentation of exhibits at the New York World Fair of 1937 and the annual meetings of the American Public Health Association. The Committee expressed its profound gratitude to the LNHO's Housing Commission for the

[78] LONA, C.H/Comm. Hab./87, Town and Country Planning: aide-mémoire by O. Olsen, 16 June 1939; C.H/Comm. Hab./72, Sewage Treatment in the Netherlands by H. Kessner, Director Government Institute for Sewage Purification, The Hague, 22 Nov. 1938.

‘stimulus…which – coming as it did at a psychological moment – has proved of incalculable value in guiding the first steps in the American housing programme along sound hygienic lines’.[79]

Whilst the LNHO’s Housing Commission carried out their impressive array of studies, the EFO and ILO were also asked to extend their lines of enquiry. In September 1936, the Assembly accepted the Swedish government’s proposal that the housing enquiries should be broadened more formally to include the EFO and ILO. The ILO had not instigated any further independent housing enquiries after 1930 (when it had published *Housing Policy in Europe: Cheap Home Building*), although it occasionally published articles in the *ILR*[80] and it still considered housing to be a key pillar of social policy. The ILO had decided that before embarking on its own independent study the best course of action was to wait and assess the implications of the LNHO’s technical studies under the Housing Commission, especially in view of formulating recommendations for policies of cheap and hygienic housing. In November 1938, it initiated a new enquiry with much more ambitious aims than previously. Its introductory survey was to cover ‘certain of the principle questions <u>for the world as a whole</u>’ (their emphasis) including:

> 1) The setting up of housing standards.
> 2) Population policy and housing.
> 3) Localization of industry and housing.
> 4) Long-range planning of housing programmes as a means to advance stability and growth of income.

In addition, the ILO decided to examine national housing policies in a broad range of countries: Britain, Chile, France, India, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Sweden, USA, and USSR. To ensure that its investigation was unique and did not cover ground from previous enquiries, seven (of the

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[79] LONA, C.H/Comm. Hab./43, Housing in France, 1937; C.H/Comm. Hab./46, ‘The Basic Principles of Healthful Housing’, *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Mar. 1938); C.H/Comm. Hab./92, Report of the Committee on the Hygiene of Housing of the American Public Health Association, 9 June 1939.
[80] See, for instance, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, G. Méquet, ‘Socialist Towns: A New Development of Housing Policy in the USSR’, *International Labour Review*, Vol. 25, No. 5 (May 1932), pp. 621-45; L. Grebler, ‘House Building, the Business Cycle, and State Intervention: I’, *International Labour Review*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Mar. 1936), pp. 337-55; L. Grebler, ‘House Building, the Business Cycle, and State Intervention: II', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Apr. 1936), pp. 468-78.

ten) countries had not been studied before and, rather than an overview of all national policies, the ILO chose to investigate certain unusual features in each country that could be of interest to the rest of the world.[81] Another discernible change in the ILO's outlook was that by 1937 it was a given that the housing was 'an important element of a programme of social policy', a striking contrast to the language of its 1920s when it had indicated that housing 'may' become so.[82]

The EFO also affirmed its belief that housing was an important constituent of social and economic policy, as first revealed in 1935. In 1937, the Assembly outlined a programme for economic and financial studies in three parts:

1) An international study of methods employed in various countries for improving housing conditions, with special reference to the cost involved and the results obtained, granted the objects in view.
2) A study of the relationship between the activity of the building industry and general economic activity.
3) Studies with a view to making recommendations concerning statistical methodology.

The third part was referred to the Committee of Statistical Experts, a joint committee established in the 1920s by the League to investigate statistical issues. For the first part, the EFO conducted an investigation whose contents were published in a report, "Urban and Rural Housing" in 1939. It adopted an unequivocal stance: 'all families, even the poorest, must be housed in accordance with certain principles which will safeguard their physical and moral well-being'. The study was authored by an independent expert, Bengt Helger of the Swedish Social Board, but it can be regarded as reflecting the EFO's view since the report was published in the EFO's name. Helger opined that although housing policies were an important feature of many countries and that some progress had been achieved since the war, 'housing conditions still leave much to be desired'. In many other countries conditions were far worse and little progress had been made at all. He

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[81] ILOA, W 8/0/1, Note on Work of the Office with Regard to Housing: Outline of Proposed Report on Housing, Nov. 1938.
[82] ILOA, W 8/01, Internal memo: The Work of the ILO in the Domain of Urban and Rural Housing, 8 July 1937; International Labour Office, *Housing Policy in Europe*, p. 59.

revealed that overcrowding (defined as an average of more than two persons per room), insanitary conditions, and slums remained: 'in every country, a large proportion of the urban population lives in unhealthy dwellings', which should, he said, be regarded as slums. In Denmark, in 1935, more than a third of homes had no W.C.; in Finland, over 20% of homes in nine principal towns had more than three persons on average per room; in France and Britain, a considerable shortage of cheap housing still existed. Even where overcrowding had eased it was often due to a declining birth rate rather than positive intervention by the authorities. The situation, he stated, 'remains unsatisfactory'. The first step was 'to fix certain minimum requirements relating to physical conditions' followed by more rigorous building inspections.[83]

The main problem affecting housing stock was that housebuilding was in private hands and Helger concluded, as Van Walré de Bordes' had done in 1935, that it was driven by housebuilders' expectation of profit and the investor's expectation of return on rent. The key was to bring costs down as affordability prevented many households from obtaining 'satisfactory' housing. Helger noted that all the measures talked about to reduce costs had, up until then, already formed a part of housing policy and had proven to be inadequate. Critically, in a precursor to post-war state housing, he foresaw that whatever was to be achieved to reduce the cost of housing it would almost certainly be due to state or municipal authorities.[84]

Helger also commented on the economic benefit of housing construction and its role as a public works policy to create employment. This was later taken up in greater detail by the Delegation on Economic Depressions, whilst addressing the second part of the Assembly's instructions to the EFO (see pp. 97-102). The Delegation looked at the influence of the trade cycle

[83] LONA, League of Nations, *Urban and Rural Housing*, Economic and Financial Organization (Geneva, 1939), pp. iv, vi, xii, xiii, xiv, xxx, 13, 15, 50, 61, 69.
[84] LONA, League of Nations, *Urban and Rural Housing*, pp. viii, xiv, xviii.

on residential building and the influence of residential housebuilding on the trade cycle, and concluded that the trade cycle influenced the supply of housing as incomes and materials increased during times of economic expansion, but the influence of demand for residential building was only 'slow and weak'. Rents did not adjust quickly because of the length of contracts and incomes had to fall considerably and for an extended period for an impact to be felt. Conversely, the influence of residential building on the trade cycle was more overt. Although building activity was only about one fifth of total investment activity in most industrial countries, the fluctuations were massive. In the USA, for instance, the total value of all new building was $9.2 billion in 1925 but in 1933 it was only $1.3 billion. Because of the size of the housing industry it was 'obvious...that these wild fluctuations have important repercussions on activity generally'. Thus, the Depression Delegation concluded, if the fluctuations could be reduced it would be an 'important step to economic stability'. Certain policies, it asserted, 'seemed to be suggested'. Public authorities should intervene to stabilize housing activity by using residential building as counter cyclical public works to create employment going so far as to say that residential housing was 'perhaps the best way to regulate economic activity' since housing was 'long-lived and the demand for them is easily postponable in good times'.[85]

The evidence reproduced here shows the extraordinary detail of the enquiries into housing carried out by the League and ILO. They accumulated and processed a vast amount of material over many years investigating, in the case of the LNHO, environmental factors that would not have seemed out of place decades later, and by doing so both organizations helped to stimulate further

[85] LONA, D.D.E./11, Delegation on Economic Depressions, Interrelationship Between Residential Building and the Trade Cycle, Note by the Secretariat, 15 June 1938; D.D.E./52 Delegation on Economic Depressions, Basis of Discussion for Report, Part C, Strategic Importance of Durable Goods Industries, 14 June 1939.

research. The EFO, for their part, became convinced of the need to make good quality housing affordable and that residential construction could form part of a strategy to counter downturns in the business cycle and generate employment. In two respects, however, the studies were disappointing. Firstly, it was never a global housing movement. Information was requested from 'tropical' countries, a rural hygiene conference for far eastern countries was held, and a few studies were conducted outside of the non-core constituency, but these were the exceptions rather than the norm. And secondly, the enquiries never came to a satisfactory conclusion. In the LNHO's case, for instance, despite more than seven years of researching the best housing practices from around the more developed world, the findings of its Housing Commission were not even published. The enquiries did not, therefore, fulfil their stated aim of achieving practical results. Government commitments to improve housing conditions by significantly increasing the housing stock and eradicating slums did not occur until after the Second World War.

What can be said, though, was that the LNHO's desire to internationalize its housing agenda by spreading the message that improvements in housing standards were critical to promoting improved health was successful. It was able, along with the EFO and ILO, to draw upon fellow enthusiasts around Europe and the USA who agreed and saw the benefits of an exchange of information, methods, and ideas. But it was more than just learning from others' experiences. There was an understanding that knowledge was to be open to all, a belief that the collective would yield more constructive results than the individual, and that it would be a movement to provide cheap housing for lower income groups. It found committed internationalists, such as the American Professor Winslow who responded positively to Rajchman's overtures and pressed successfully for the establishment of an American national committee. Winslow also looked favourably upon a proposal by the Housing Commission in June 1937 to create an international housing institute

believing that it would be of great value and 'ideally sponsored by the Health Section of the League'. With the increased interest in housing at that time he insisted that the many 'basic problems…engineering, structural, hygienic, psychological, social, economic, educational, governmental' needed to be studied and solved. Robert Davison, Director of Housing Research at the John B. Pierce Foundation in New York and a member of the American national housing committee, echoed those sentiments. He concurred with the planned institute's aim of conducting research in low-cost housing; an 'urgent need' existed because housing was too expensive. He also believed that it should be more than an agency to coordinate information, but rather one that should conduct its own research since the problems of delivering good quality, affordable housing were global and 'much can be gained by attacking it on an international basis'.[86]

[86] LONA, C.H/Comm. Hab./67, Letter from Professor C. Winslow regarding an International Institute of Housing, 20 Oct. 1938; C.H/Comm. Hab./68, Proposed International Institute for Technical Research in Low-Cost Housing by Robert Davison, Director at John B. Pierce Foundation, New York, 21 Oct. 1938.

Chapter Five: Nutrition

This chapter traces the development of the League and ILO's nutrition agenda during the period 1931-37. It is in three parts. The first section identifies how the LNHO was drawn in to investigate nutrition by looking at the developments in the new field of nutritional science at the national level before focusing on the national/international dynamic and, in particular, on those nutritionists who worked with the LNHO. It looks at how the impact of the Depression led the LNHO to establish a link between nutrition and unemployment and in the process to establish a link between nutrition and public health. This fits with the shifting perspective of the LNHO in the 1930s from a disease paradigm towards one that was preventative that concentrated on social medicine.[1] The second section examines the next, expansive stage of the LNHO investigations, which were of a technical and medical nature, and built upon its conviction that health was 'largely bound up with the state of nutrition'.[2] The third section examines the developments that led to a comprehensive, multi-agency investigation into the broader aspects relating to nutrition. The Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition was established by a League of Nations Assembly resolution in September 1935 and chaired by the British politician, Viscount Astor. It published an *Interim Report*[3] in 1936 and a *Final Report*[4] in August 1937. The Mixed Committee was comprised of outside experts – nutritionists, physiologists, agriculturalists, and economists – as

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[1] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, pp. 21-3, 296-9.

[2] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'Economic Depression and Public Health', p. 443.

[3] The *Interim Report* was published as four volumes. Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 165, League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition: Vol. I, Interim Report of the Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition* (Geneva, 1936); LN 166, League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition: Vol. II, Physiological Bases of Nutrition* (Geneva, 1936); LN 167, League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition: Vol. III, Nutrition in Various Countries* (Geneva, 1936); LN 168, League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition: Vol. IV, Statistics of Food Production, Consumption and Prices* (Geneva, 1936).

[4] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 169, League of Nations, *Final Report of the Mixed Committee of the League of Nations on the Relation of Nutrition to Health, Agriculture & Economic Policy* (Geneva, 1937).

well as representatives from the LNHO, the EFO the ILO, and the IIA. This broad coalition served to emphasize the interconnectedness of the nutrition issue, exemplified by the ILO's contribution, *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy*,[5] which was quoted at length in the Mixed Committee's *Final Report*.

The Great Depression and Nutrition

"The Economic Depression and Public Health", published by the LNHO in September 1932 (see p. 177), highlighted the massive drop in income suffered by the unemployed during the Depression. Although there had been a 19% decline in the cost of living and a 25% fall in food prices, data of unemployed families, as mentioned above (p. 179), revealed that since 1927 incomes in many cases were down by more than 50%. Despite outside intervention from families, friends, and charities that had offset this fall in income, the provision in some areas of cheap food and food kitchens, and that some people had resorted to growing their own food, it was deemed unlikely that these measures had been able to alleviate such a substantial shortfall. The report stated that it believed that large numbers, probably millions, were suffering from malnutrition, a new term that had recently emerged.[6] Evidence provided to the LNHO by Dr G.P. Crowden of the Department of Industrial Physiology, London School of Tropical Medicine added weight to this view by indicating that in areas of high rents, such as London, low-paid labourers and the unemployed must have experienced problems in attaining an adequate diet. Further research by Professor E.P. Cathcart, a renowned Scottish physiologist, and A.M.T. Murray carried out in conjunction with Britain's Medical Research Council on a small number of unemployed families

[5] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy*, Studies and Reports, Series B (Social and Economic Conditions), No. 23 (Geneva, 1936).
[6] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'Economic Depression and Public Health', pp. 447-8.

in Reading and Cardiff, also showed a worrying trend. Very high proportions of income were spent on food, up to 78% in the poorest families. Although the Cathcart-Murray enquiries suggested that adequate diets had been maintained, the high percentage devoted to food left little margin for error for families on low incomes.[7]

The research by Cathcart-Murray and Crowden substantiated other evidence in Germany that had come to the attention of Otto Olsen, the author of "The Economic Depression and Public Health". An increase in the number of cases of tuberculosis and rickets had contributed to the Reich's Public Health Office decision to declare in August 1931 that, 'it can be of no doubt that an increase in the number of unemployed involves an immense amount of social and economic distress and constitutes an extremely grave danger to public health even if its consequences are not yet reflected in the morbidity and mortality statistics'.[8] The Reich's Public Health Office suggested that the relatively high standard of living before 1929 had helped to provide longer term resistance, and with the assistance from the state, family, and friends most people had managed to ward off the worst effects of the crisis. However, it believed that resistance would eventually expire. A second memo written by the Prussian Minister of Social Welfare declared that up until the autumn of 1931 the health of children of elementary school age had remained satisfactory, but between then and the summer of 1932 it had worsened markedly. This was true of much of the country, the author believed, as illnesses associated with 'underfeeding' abounded; particularly affected were the dependants of the unemployed. Similar conditions had been discovered at a dispensary in Kreuzberg, South Berlin where the unemployed had revealed an 'alarming' weight-loss. In another

[7] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'Economic Depression and Public Health', pp. 449-50.
[8] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'Economic Depression and Public Health', pp. 458-9.

working-class area of Berlin, the height and weight of children of the employed was 'definitely backward'. Significant increases in the number of cases of tuberculosis and rickets in children and reports from school doctors of the 'growing debility of schoolchildren' had also been detected. Although Olsen's report pointed out that some districts of Berlin and Frankfurt had revealed no change, the accumulation of evidence of declining health represented 'a grave warning'. It was all the more worrying since these health problems had all been uncovered before the Emergency Decree of June 1932, which reduced allowances again, including that of unemployment insurance by 23%.[9] In itself, "The Economic Depression and Public Health" was a commentary by the LNHO on the international regime since the LNHO was eliciting sympathy for the German authorities who so publicly blamed their economic and financial plight on reparations.

The report went on to state that declining income not only led to lower food consumption but it also forced people to substitute poorer quality foods. Cheaper, less nutritious food with reduced protein, vitamins and other essential minerals was inevitable even if at times the alternatives may have provided a higher calorie intake e.g. with bread and cereals. In Germany, these trends were particularly pronounced. The report had a further warning here, too, citing three dietary studies (albeit of small numbers of unemployed families) that 'unemployment relief is insufficient to enable the average unemployed family to buy enough to eat' with regards to calories. Olsen conceded, though, that this statement contained 'little direct evidence'; rather, it was based on food prices and allowances paid.[10]

In an innovative development, the report contained a section on the psychological impact of the crisis. It was, admittedly, a very brief passage which was based on no more than an

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[9] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'Economic Depression and Public Health', pp. 459-65.

[10] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'Economic Depression and Public Health', pp. 455-8.

unspecified general assessment. 'Mental health' of course had less positive connotations in this period so there was probably some reluctance to delve into the subject much further. Nonetheless, it was designed to show sympathy with the workers' plight of enforced, extended unemployment; the ILO's influence is very likely to have been at work here. The report noted that sources in Britain, Germany, and the USA had uncovered 'serious psychological disturbances among the unemployed and...their families' who displayed 'anxiety, fear, bitterness, discouragement, loss of self-confidence, [and] profound despair'. Without question, these were tentative conclusions but Olsen's report concluded with a statement declaring that "The Economic Depression and Public Health" was not meant to be a definitive authority on the subject, but rather its objective had been merely to offer observations for further investigation.[11] In fact, as mentioned above, the LNHO did not take this challenge on and did not publish any further results on the psychological impact of unemployment.[12]

A pertinent question to ask is why the LNHO waited so long to respond to the economic crisis. Borowy suggests 'sheer helplessness' or bewilderment, both of which are no doubt partly true, and that the crisis finally caught up with the LNHO.[13] The LNHO was also, like the League's other technical sections, constrained by what it could do. Its main function was to service the Health Committee and as such it was at the mercy of the members of the Health Committee, many of whom, as has been shown, were reluctant for the LNHO to broaden its sphere of influence. Other countries that were non-committee members were, however, more willing to approach the LNHO for help and information. Rajchman revealed that in the summer of 1932 the LNHO had received many outside requests for information regarding the effects of the economic crisis on

[11] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'Economic Depression and Public Health', pp. 467-8.
[12] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, pp. 364-5.
[13] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, p. 361.

health since there was ‘a general feeling that the unemployed will suffer physically’ due to declining incomes.[14] The situation in Germany was also surely a critical element. The LNHO did not operate in a political vacuum and Olsen’s communications with Rajchman whilst he was in Germany carrying out the research outlined not only the severity of conditions on the ground but also the political situation. ‘Beggars are everywhere’, he told Rajchman, whilst also referencing the strength of the Nazi Party.[15]

The problems facing Germany and the LNHO’s overall concern about the effects of the Depression also fit with the shift in the LNHO’s focus from disease towards social medicine. In the 1920s, the LNHO had been asked by the Greek, Bolivian, and Chinese authorities to help with reforming their public health systems. In 1928, it had also begun to investigate rural hygiene which looked at specific health issues affecting rural communities.[16] The presentation and tone of Olsen’s report shows that the LNHO had by then gained the confidence from these early forays into public health to be able to promote itself as an institution to drive the agenda on social medicine.[17] The evidence employed in Olsen’s report was selective and evidently designed to communicate a particular view. It seized the opportunity to stress the LNHO’s new approach on health prevention and called for new ways in which to understand the impact of unemployment. It declared that the use of general mortality and morbidity statistics were imperfect measures by which to evaluate a population’s health. Olsen had contacted many health officials and academics and specifically asked for information about ‘the dangers to health arising from the undernourishment of the unemployed and other classes of the population’. He demanded ‘facts as may show that the crisis

[14] LONA, R 5866/8A/37494/1409, Rajchman to Newsholme, 28 June 1932.
[15] Balińska, *For the Good of Humanity*, pp. 111-12.
[16] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, pp. 301-60. The LNHO held its first European Conference on Rural Hygiene in June-July 1931 with representatives from thirty-two countries, including observers from eight non-European countries. The success of this Conference led to calls from non-Europeans for similar conferences for other regions. A second Far Eastern Intergovernmental Conference on Rural Hygiene was held in Bandoeng, Java in 1937.
[17] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, p. 394.

has already produced harmful effects on the health of children' such as disease, illness, and height and/or weight change.[18]

Much of the evidence presented to Olsen, however, was unexpectedly 'good'. Many respondents found no deterioration in health, contrary to the LNHO's expectations, or perhaps, hope. Charles Webster's influential article from the 1980s attributed this, for the British at least, to overly optimistic accounts from health authorities.[19] Dame Janet Campbell, a senior British Ministry of Health official with responsibility for maternity and child welfare and a member of the LNHO's Health Committee between 1930 and 1936,[20] was unable to find any evidence of unemployment affecting health, although she admitted her surprise at that finding. Cases of 'serious' rickets had continued to decline, the height and weight of children taken by school medical officers had shown no deterioration, and a recent report on tuberculosis concluded that the level of wages, unemployment benefits, and local authorities' intervention to take children into care indicated that the Depression's influence on the disease was likely to be 'negligible'.[21] Professor E. Gorter, Director of the Children's Clinic at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, offered similar conclusions. Gorter was another enthusiastic long-time collaborator of the LNHO who sat on a number of the LNHO's expert committees during the 1930s, and welcomed the LNHO to his laboratory in Leiden in 1933 to conduct research. He did not agree that the crisis had adversely impacted on health since he had not seen any evidence of increased mortality rates; he believed that the advent of unemployment insurance had prevented nutritional levels from falling. Although he noted a slight increase in cases of rickets he remained reluctant to

[18] LONA, R 5866/8A/37494/1409, Olsen to various, 9 June 1932.
[19] C. Webster, 'Healthy or Hungry Thirties?', *History Workshop*, Vol. 13 (Spring 1982), pp. 110-129.
[20] M. Hogarth, 'Campbell, Dame Janet Mary (1887-1954)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 01 Aug. 2010, at http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32267?docPos=2.
[21] LONA, R 5866/8A/37494/1409, Campbell to Olsen, 27 June 1932.

conclude that the Depression was the cause. The recipient of his letter at the LNHO patently disagreed since that individual placed an exclamation mark beside this piece of information on Gorter's letter; evidence of rickets was precisely the type of evidence that the LNHO was looking for.[22]

More startling still was the report sent by Cumming whose reply to the LNHO flatly contradicted the LNHO's expectations. Cumming's enquiries found that, rather than the Depression having had any negative impact on health, the Depression may have actually improved health. As evidence, he pointed out that mortality and morbidity rates had continued their long-term downward trend. Of course, governments and their officials were likely to downplay the extent of the Depression's effects on a country's health problems since any evidence to the contrary was a commentary on those institutions' potential failings. As it was, Rajchman remained unconvinced by Cumming's conclusions and told him so; Rajchman's reply reiterated the LNHO's view that to concentrate on mortality and morbidity rates offered no evidence as to the 'debilitating effects of the Depression'.[23] He informed Cumming that the LNHO wanted more detailed information on diets consumed by the unemployed and their dependants as evidence had emerged elsewhere of deteriorating health in this regard. In effect, Cumming's assessment of the situation in the USA only served to intensify Rajchman's, and the LNHO's, efforts to counter those who may have interpreted Cumming's conclusions as a reason for limiting state involvement and thus preventing reform of social health.[24]

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[22] LONA, R 5866/8A/37494/1409, Gorter to Olsen, 6 July 1932.
[23] LONA, R 5866/8A/37494/1409, Rajchman to Cumming, 27 Aug. 1932.
[24] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, p. 362.

The connection that the LNHO made between nutrition and unemployment fit with the LNHO's new approach towards social medicine. In fact, Rajchman had already appointed its first full-time nutritionist, Wallace Ruddell Aykroyd, in 1931 although Aykroyd's appointment was unconnected to the Depression. Aykroyd was a young, talented scientist who had come to the attention of the scientific community by virtue of his ground-breaking research on beriberi in Newfoundland, Canada in the mid-1920s. A three-year fellowship at the Lister Institute of Preventative Medicine in 1928 followed, where he continued laboratory and field research on vitamin deficiencies, and, in the spring of 1931, led to his being considered for the LNHO's new post. After four years at the LNHO, Aykroyd left in 1935 to take up a position as Director of Nutritional Research Laboratories, Coonoor, India, replacing the eminent nutritional physiologist Sir Robert McCarrison. After Aykroyd's appointment in India the LNHO asked the Coonoor laboratory to become the coordinating facility for all of its nutritional studies in the Far East.[25] Aykroyd remained in India until 1946 (he sat on the Famine Enquiry Commission which was established to investigate the Bengal famine of 1943) when he accepted the position as the first Director of the Nutrition Division at the newly created Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), headed by the pre-eminent nutritional physiologist John Boyd Orr.[26]

Aykroyd's beliefs regarding nutrition mirrored Rajchman's. Aykroyd was passionate about nutritional research, concerned that governments were not doing enough to overcome food deficiency diseases, and convinced that improved nutrition would have positive social benefits. Rajchman's appointment of a full-time nutritionist was indeed a radical move, especially at a time of severe budgetary pressures for the League, as nutrition was an emerging, if innovative, area of

[25] P. Weindling, 'The Role of International Organizations in Setting Nutritional Standards in the 1920s and 1930s', in Kamminga, H., and Cunningham, A., *Science and Culture of Nutrition, 1840-1940* (Amsterdam, 1995), pp. 319-32, pp. 328-9.
[26] LONA, R 5866/8A/24183/1409, Aykroyd to Boudreau, 18 Apr. 1931; Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, p. 382.

science. Even though the value of certain foods to maintain health had long been recognized it was only during the latter half of the nineteenth century that hunger became a social issue as science began to explore the link between health and diet.[27] Increasingly, food came under the state's purview prompting a proliferation of research for, and in, state institutions including the military, prisons, and, with the advent of compulsory education, schools.[28] At the turn of twentieth century, social commentators and social investigators were quick to absorb elements of the new science and to use the 'objective' measurements of dietary requirements: J.A Hobson talked of the 'science of food' and Seebohm Rowntree's classic study in York defined poverty using the latest nutritional science.[29] Despite attracting the attention of social reformers, some public authorities, and many scientists, the view remained that those suffering from poor nutrition did so because of ignorance, mainly due to the mother's education, culinary skills, and/or inability to manage the household budget.[30] The League was guilty at times, too, of adopting this moralizing and patronizing tone.

A major shift in nutritional science started to emerge in the decade or so before the First World War. Until then nutritional science had contributed little to what constituted an 'adequate diet' but the prevailing thermodynamic model – food as fuel – was challenged by biochemists who stressed the micronutrients – minerals and vitamins – that were to be found within food. Casimir Funk, a Polish nutritionist working at the Lister Institute of Preventative Medicine in London, is widely regarded to have been the first to have isolated a vitamin, later shown to be vitamin B_3, in

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[27] H. Kamminga and A. Cunningham, 'Introduction: The Science and Culture of Nutrition, 1840-1940', in *The Science and Culture of Nutrition*, pp. 2-14; J. Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2007), pp. 2-15.

[28] J. Barona, 'Nutrition and Health. The International Context during the Interwar Crisis', *Social History of Medicine*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2008), pp. 87–105, p. 89; Kamminga and Cunningham, *Science and Culture of Nutrition*, p. 2.

[29] Vernon, *Hunger*, pp. 83-91.

[30] D. Smith and M. Nicholson, 'Nutrition, Education, Ignorance and Income: A Twentieth-Century Debate', in Kamminga and A. Cunningham, *Science and Culture of Nutrition*, pp. 288-318, pp. 292-9. See, for example, D. N. Paton, J. C. Dunlop, and E. Inglis, *A Study of the Diet of the Labouring Classes in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1902), pp. 87-8.

1912. He had read some preliminary research that the nutritional deficiency disease beriberi was evident with a diet predominantly based on milled rather than brown rice and decided to investigate further. The discovery of a vitamin caused him to declare that other diseases such as rickets, pellagra, and scurvy were likely to be nutritional deficiency diseases caused by a lack of vitamins. Funk was emblematic of the cosmopolitan, international life, and web of interactions of scientists of that era. Born in Warsaw, he received his PhD from the University of Basle after which he worked briefly at the University of Berlin before taking up various research posts in Britain, France, Poland, and the USA. In 1924, he was appointed head of the Biochemistry department at the National Institute of Hygiene in Poland,[31] the institution that had been established by Rajchman in Warsaw at the end of the First World War.[32] Rajchman enjoyed a longstanding interest in nutrition through his association with Funk.[33]

The biochemists did not immediately usurp the thermodynamic model with the consequence that agreement between the two camps was often problematic.[34] Nutritionists were often apt to overstate their claims. Moreover, the laboratories and the techniques followed inside them were far from infallible. In this way, the space for international agency emerged as a respected forum where methodologies, standards, and outcomes could be compared, contrasted, and refined. In fact, in Aykroyd's application for the position of the LNHO's nutritionist he had expressed confidence in the LNHO's potential to effect change in the international space and his proposal for future nutritional studies to be undertaken by the LNHO had stressed the importance of one of the LNHO's key intermediary functions: the prospect of the LNHO helping to achieve

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[31] P. Griminger, 'Casimir Funk: A Biographical Sketch (1884-1967)', *The Journal of Nutrition*, Vol. 102 (1972), pp. 1107-13.
[32] Balińska, *For the Good of Humanity,* p. xvi.
[33] Weindling, 'The Role of International Organizations', p. 321.
[34] D. Smith and M. Nicholson, 'The "Glasgow School" of Findlay and Cathcart: Conservative Thought in Chemical Physiology, Nutrition and Public Health', *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (May 1989), pp. 195-238, pp. 195-6, 223-4.

standardization of methodology.[35] Indeed, the evidence reveals that the group of world-renowned nutritional experts that worked with and for the LNHO during the 1930s had an almost unanimous desire to see the LNHO act in this supervisory role. Thus, the connection that the LNHO made between nutrition and unemployment ensured that the LNHO's nutrition enquiries brought together two separate elements: to approach nutrition through a public health perspective and the desire to standardize dietary requirements. It was a similar methodology to the LNHO's epidemiological work in the 1920s on the standardization of tests, diseases, and statistics.[36]

While the nutritionists working with the LNHO were supportive of the LNHO's efforts and intervention as an international agency, it is important to recognize the critical role of the 'colonial laboratory' in the development of nutritional studies in their period.[37] Christiaan Eijkman was the Dutch physician and Professor of Physiology whose initial research in the late nineteenth century in the Dutch Indies had stimulated Funk's research and discovery in 1912. In fact, it was Eijkman who was (jointly) awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1929 for his contribution to the discovery of vitamins.[38] Aykroyd, of course, moved from Canada to India via the LNHO and one of Aykroyd's colleagues at the LNHO, Etienne Burnet, a physician and bacteriologist, similarly sandwiched eight years at the LNHO between two extensive periods at the Pasteur Institute in Tunis as deputy director and then as head of the Institute.

The preeminent colonial nutritionist, though, was John Boyd Orr (introduced in chapter one) who founded and directed the Imperial Bureau of Animal Nutrition, Rowett Institute,

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[35] LONA, R 5866/8A/24183/1409, Aykroyd to Boyd Orr, 21 Oct. 1931; Aykroyd to Boudreau, 18 Apr. 1931, Report to the League of Nations (Health Section) on the Possibilities of Nutritional Research on an International Basis by W.R. Aykroyd.
[36] Weindling, 'The Role of International Organizations', pp. 321-2.
[37] M. Worboys, 'The Discovery of Colonial Malnutrition between the Wars', in D. Arnold (ed.), *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester, 1988), pp. 208-25; Vernon, *Hunger*, pp. 3, 104-17.
[38] E.V. McCollum, E. Orent-Keiles, and H. Day, *The Newer Knowledge of Nutrition*, 5th edn (New York, 1939), pp. 17-18.

Aberdeen. Boyd Orr and his staff worked widely across the empire. Although Boyd Orr focused on animal nutrition during the 1920s and only switched to human nutrition in the 1930s, he had been convinced for some time of the relationship between a poor diet and poor health, one he deemed to be of 'enormous economic and social importance', and of the direct correlation between diet and income. His views were shaped by a mixture of his religious background and his formative experiences whilst at Glasgow University where he first encountered slums, hunger, and poverty. This left him with left-wing political sympathies, not as a revolutionary but rather one who had a humanitarian concern for those less privileged than himself, and one who was convinced that poor diets were due to low income.[39]

Boyd Orr's motivations for working with, and his attitude towards, the LNHO epitomize the key role played by the LNHO. The pioneering field of nutrition was constantly making new discoveries but problems and tension ensued as agreement was often difficult. But since no equivalent institution had ever existed before, initially it had to prove to health professionals that it was worthy of their time, consideration and, crucially, that it had the authority to act in matters of international health. Vernon informed us how the intervention of the LNHO's Permanent Commission on Biological Standardization potentially 'restored credibility to nutritional science' with its standardization of four vitamins in 1931.[40] The other international health organization that existed at the time, the *OIHP*, was ostensibly an international health organization in name only; based in Paris, it was French-dominated, had limited aims, and was not highly regarded by most medical experts.[41] The quality, approach, and independence of the LNHO's work in the 1920s and

[39] M. Bulmer, 'Mobilising social knowledge for social welfare: intermediary institutions in the political systems of the United States and Great Britain between the First and Second World Wars', in P. Weindling, (ed.), *International Health Organizations and Movements, 1918-39* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 305-25, p. 312; J. Boyd Orr, *As I Recall* (London, 1966), pp. 29, 42-3.
[40] Vernon, *Hunger*, pp. 91-101.
[41] Dubin, 'League of Nations Health Organization', p. 71.

the fact that it had employed some outstanding scientists helped to establish the LNHO, and for it to perform effectively the role of oversight which no other international health body at the time was willing or able to do. In fact, the nutritionists working and researching at the time viewed, desired, and expected the LNHO to act in this role.

But even with the backing of experts, Boyd Orr understood that in 1931 many governments remained unconvinced of the link between diet and health and that insufficient data existed at that time to prove the connection. Thus, he called for more thorough studies to be undertaken. Aykroyd also firmly believed in the underconsumption thesis, i.e. that sub-standard diets were largely due to insufficient income, and like Boyd Orr he felt that governments had an obligation to intervene. 'All over the world', he said, 'practical preventative medicine lags far behind modern scientific knowledge and few governments appear to be taking steps to attack the problem effectively'. But Aykroyd and Boyd Orr were only too aware of the political ramifications of their views, and on this point Aykroyd acknowledged that in 1931 it 'would be difficult to secure general assent'.[42]

The revolution in human nutrition originated from experiments on animal nutrition undertaken by the British biochemist Frederick Gowland Hopkins immediately prior to the First World War. Hopkins, incidentally, was the joint winner with Eijkman in 1929 of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. Whilst establishing the thriving Dunn Institute in Biochemistry at Cambridge University, Hopkins deduced that some unknown 'accessory' substances in tiny quantities stimulated growth.[43] His experiments triggered numerous studies at the Lister Institute in London and at Boyd Orr's Rowett Institute, as well as his own Dunn Institute. In a crucial innovation during the interwar period, much of the research in the 'colonial laboratory', and

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[42] LONA, R 5866/8A/24183/1409, Aykroyd to Boudreau, 16 Apr. 1931; W.R. Aykroyd, Report to the League of Nations (Health Section) on the Possibilities of Nutritional Research on an International Basis: Preliminary Observation; LONA, R 5866/8A/31243/1409, Aykroyd to Boyd Orr, 21 Oct. 1931.
[43] Kamminga and Cunningham, *Science and Culture of Nutrition*, p. 10.

outside, was funded by government agencies or intermediary institutions.[44] Much of this research was funded by the Medical Research Council (MRC) after its formal establishment in 1919. The physiologist Walter Fletcher, the secretary of the MRC 1919-33, appealed for state funding for nutritional research to follow up these early findings. He appealed to the government by invoking statistics that identified the poor physical state of working-class recruits for the war.[45] But whilst Fletcher was an ardent supporter of the new nutritional science, the Ministry of Health was less enthusiastic and they clashed consistently up until Fletcher's death in 1933. Fletcher believed that the Ministry did not prioritize nutrition, nor did it make enough use of the latest knowledge. The result was that despite the increased volume of nutritional research being conducted at the time, nutrition had not been picked up by the 'public health movement'. Fletcher's replacement as secretary of the MRC, Edward Mellanby, tried to persuade the Ministry of Health through a less confrontational approach. Mellanby, too, was a forerunner in the new field of nutrition most famous for establishing that rickets were caused by a deficiency of a 'fat-soluble vitamin', later discovered to be vitamin D.[46] He too had a long association with the League on subjects relating to nutrition dating back at least ten years and was an ardent supporter of its nutrition agenda.

In the colonies, the funding bodies began to seek economic or agricultural development through improvements to local diets which they hoped would lead to an increase in labour productivity. Previously in the British Empire, for instance, all health initiatives had passed through the Colonial Medical Service which specialized narrowly in 'tropical' medicine. But a newly established Cabinet Committee on Civil Research commissioned research for Boyd Orr in

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[44] Bulmer, 'Mobilizing Social Knowledge'.
[45] C. Petty, 'Primary Research and Public Health: The Prioritization of Nutrition Research in interwar Britain', in J. Austoker and L. Bryder, *Historical Perspectives on the Role of the MRC* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 83-108, pp. 84-88.
[46] B.S. Platt, 'Mellanby, Sir Edward (1884-1955)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 5 Jan. 2012, at http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34980?docPos=1.

Kenya and South Africa in 1925 to investigate livestock losses. Boyd Orr concluded that it was due to lack of nutrients in the grasslands which he suggested could be overcome by adding fertilizers. He also co-conducted a dietary and health survey with John Gilks, head of the Medical Department in Kenya of two African tribes. The Colonial Office, Medical Research Council, and Empire Marketing Board were impressed by Boyd Orr and Gilks' efforts and funded further enquiries which was published in 1931.[47] Their efforts helped to stimulate research in other colonies including an extensive volume by Georges Hardy and Charles Richet on nutrition in the French empire.[48]

American philanthropic organizations were also an important financial contributor to nutritional science in the 'colonial laboratory', as well as in the USA. The Carnegie Corporation funded William Malcolm Hailey's *African Survey* and jointly with the Rockefeller Foundation they supported the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures at Oxford and the Rowett Institute. Naturally, there was considerable overlap as many of the actors were involved in the organization or direction of each other's projects.[49]

The colonial influence on some of the wider issues can be overstated, though. Vernon has recently argued how the contribution of British nutritionists, especially Orr and Aykroyd, was instrumental in creating the interconnection between the empire and nutrition, health, and agriculture including, for instance, the establishment of the Committee on Nutrition in the Colonial Empire (CNCE), a body created to coordinate the collection of relevant information on nutrition from less developed countries in the empire. For sure, Orr and Aykroyd were important colonial

[47] Worboys, 'The Discovery of Colonial Malnutrition', pp. 210-13; Vernon, *Hunger*, pp. 109-11; J. Boyd Orr and J. Gilks, *Studies in Nutrition: The Physique and Health of Two African Tribes* (London, 1931).
[48] Worboys, 'The Discovery of Colonial Malnutrition', p. 214; G. Hardy and C. Richet, *L'alimentation indigène dans les colonies françaises, protectorats et territoires sous mandat* (Paris, 1933).
[49] Vernon, *Hunger*, pp. 104-12.

actors but, as will be shown in the third section of this chapter, the importance of other political connections cannot be overlooked. The work of Boyd Orr and Ackroyd on nutrition gained traction through a LNHO-led multi-agency programme with Rajchman, Loveday, Butler, a British government minister, Earl De La Warr, and officials, in addition to Stanley Bruce, the former Prime Minister of Australia, at the forefront of the campaign. It was Bruce who coined the phrase the 'marriage of health and agriculture' during a debate on nutrition at the Assembly in September 1935, which helped to persuade his fellow delegates of the need for a broad and wide-ranging investigation on all aspects of nutrition. In fact, without this nutritional network it is unlikely that nutrition would even have been a subject of debate of the 1935 Assembly. The LNHO was not focused as much on colonial development – although the Australian influence cannot be underestimated – as much as it was on development in Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, whilst Aykroyd may have been involved with the creation of the CNCE since he was working in India at the time, it is overstating it to say that he the 'catalyst'. Rather the British government only created the CNCE after the LNHO had requested imperial authorities to gather information across all of their colonies for the 1937 Far Eastern Intergovernmental Conference on Rural Hygiene.[50]

Of course, pioneering nutritionists were not the only ones focused on nutrition and food. The Depression caused many to question the role of government. In Britain, this exploded during the 1930s with the debate over 'Hungry England'. Articles, mainly in the left-wing press, followed the publication of Fenner Brockway's *Hungry England* which brought attention to the plight of the millions of unemployed and their dependents who were struggling to feed themselves on meagre unemployment benefits. But it was not just that the unemployed lacked a sufficient quantity of food, they also lacked quality. Here, the influence of biochemistry was critical as the

[50] Vernon, *Hunger*, pp. 110-12.

emphasis on vitamins and minerals saw the emergence of a new language of malnutrition replacing undernutrition and 'optimum' replacing 'minimum' nutritional standards. Left-wing social commentary politicized the debate and focused on the inability of the poor and the unemployed to afford the quality of diets that were suggested.[51] The Ministry of Health's response was to establish the Advisory Committee on Nutrition (ACN) in the late 1920s with E.P. Cathcart amongst its members. Cathcart was Regius Professor of Physiology at the University of Glasgow and a member of the Committee on Nutrition in the Colonial Empire and the Medical Research Council. A source of tension was that Cathcart was firmly in the thermodynamic camp whilst Boyd Orr and Mellanby, who were not appointed to the ACN, were biochemists.[52] Cathcart also disagreed with Boyd Orr over the causes of poor nutrition. Cathcart believed that education was the key to overcoming 'tradition, habits...[and] ignorance'. Income, in his view, was subsidiary although he agreed that it was an important factor in the quality of diet, as opposed to the quantity of diet.[53] Mellanby agreed with Cathcart on this point, but Boyd Orr was convinced that poor nutrition was due to low income.

The British government's appointment of the ACN did not prevent widespread criticism – including by the ILO – over the level of unemployment benefit to be paid under the government's Unemployment Act of 1934.[54] At the end of 1933, the British Medical Association's own nutrition committee clashed with the ACN over the nutritional values that it believed should constitute an 'adequate' diet. Two pressure groups, the Children's Minimum Council and the Committee against Malnutrition, grew out of this public spat and both thereafter campaigned for higher nutritional

[51] Smith and Nicholson, 'Nutrition, Education, Ignorance and Income', pp. 302-06.
[52] R.C. Garry, 'Cathcart, Edward Provan (1857-1954)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 20 Jan. 2012, at http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2117/view/article/32327?docPos=7.
[53] ILOA, T 127/1000/1/1, Committee of Experts on Workers' Nutrition, 2-7 Dec. 1935.
[54] Weindling, 'Social Medicine, p. 144.

standards.[55] In 1936, four crucial contributions were advanced to help shape the debate, once again, towards nutrition as a feature of public health: G.C.M. McGonigle and J. Kirby, *Poverty and Public Health*; Boyd Orr, *Food, Health and Income*; McCarrison, *Nutrition and National Health*; and the LNHO's *Interim Report of the Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition, Vol. 1, The Problem of Nutrition*.[56] All produced a damning indictment of life in the 1930s and that poor nutrition was chiefly due to poverty.[57] Orr's publication led to a debate in the House of Commons, although Kingsley Wood, the Minister of Health, vehemently continued to defend the government's view that ignorance and not poverty was the chief cause of malnutrition, invoking Cathcart's view as support.[58] McGonigle refuted the ignorance argument in a strongly worded letter to *The Times* in March 1936.[59]

Where Cathcart agreed with Boyd Orr and Mellanby was over the role of the LNHO. In early 1932, as Rajchman discussed a potential role for the LNHO in standardizing methodology of dietary studies, Cathcart propounded that the LNHO should 'definitely' intervene and that 'unless some central authority takes the matter in hand there will be no unanimity' on standardization.[60] The following month Cathcart accepted Rajchman's offer to chair a conference held in September 1932 in Rome, whose aim was to agree on the daily amount of each food accessory e.g. protein, carbohydrate, vitamins that should constitute a diet. Cathcart informed Aykroyd that if they reached agreement at the conference he would be willing to use his influence

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[55] Smith and Nicholson, 'Nutrition, Education, Ignorance and Income', p. 299; Vernon, *Hunger*, pp. 118-34.
[56] G.C.M. McGonigle and J. Kirby, *Poverty and Public Health* (London, 1936); J. Boyd Orr, *Food, Health and Income: Report on a Survey of Adequacy of Diet in Relation to Income* (London, 1936); R. McCarrison, *Nutrition and National Health: Being the Cantor Lectures Delivered before the Royal Society of Arts 1936* (London, [1936], 1944); and League of Nations, *Interim Report.*
[57] Vernon, *Hunger*, pp. 134-9.
[58] Smith and Nicholson, 'Nutrition, Education, Ignorance and Income', pp. 300-01.
[59] G.C.M. McGonigle, 'Poverty and Public Health', letter to *The Times*, 26 Mar. 1936.
[60] LONA, R 5866/8A/36440/1409, Cathcart to Rajchman, 31 Mar. 1932.

as the only foreign editor of the *American Journal of Nutrition* to write an article for the journal in the hope that he might be able to influence its American audience.[61]

Innovations in nutritional research were not, of course, confined to Britain or its colonies. In 1917, the American biochemist Elmer McCollum accepted the position as the first Professor and Head of the Department of Chemical Hygiene, later Biochemistry, in the newly formed School of Hygiene and Public Health at John Hopkins University. Initially, his ground-breaking laboratory work concentrated on the analysis of the growth-promoting factors in protein-free milk which led to the isolation of the first known fat-soluble vitamin, later named as vitamin A. He discovered this in 1913 (although the vitamin was not isolated until 1937) and he went on to co-discover vitamin D in 1921. The findings helped McCollum to demonstrate the relationship between nutritional deficiencies and the clinical symptoms of disease. In collaboration with a colleague he also helped to establish the nomenclature for vitamins and he was the first scientist to use lab rats. He went on to have a distinguished research career supplemented by great public service, including membership of numerous government boards and panels, and international nutritional organizations. He is regarded as having probably had the single greatest influence on nutritional policies and practices in the USA.[62] He was also a constant presence among the LNHO's expert nutritionists.

One other actor of note interested in nutritional science at the time was the food industry. Food manufacturers were ultimately driven by profit, of course, and looked to use the latest nutritional science for these ends, especially for advertising purposes. But although most

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[61] LONA, R 5866/8A/36440/1409, Cathcart to Aykroyd, 25 July 1932.

[62] R. D. Simoni, R. L. Hill, and M. Vaughan, 'Nutritional Biochemistry and the Discovery of Vitamins: the Work of Elmer Verner McCollum', *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, Vol. 277, No. 19 (May 2002), pp. 16-18; K.J. Carpenter, 'The Nobel Prize and the Discovery of Vitamins', accessed 14 July 2010, at http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/medicine/articles/carpenter/.

manufacturers employed their own nutritionists they also, on occasion, commissioned research through academic research institutions. Colman's consulted Hopkins over a baby food they were developing in the mid-1920s and then commissioned a number of Hopkins' colleagues from the Cambridge Biochemistry Department whom Hopkins' had appointed as head of the Dunn Nutrition Laboratory to conduct the research. Two of the researchers thereafter remained with Colman's.[63]

Public Health and Nutrition: The Expansion of the Nutrition Agenda, 1932-5

Despite the reluctance of the likes of Cumming and the accusation that the "Depression and Public Health" was selective in its assessment of evidence, the consequences were nonetheless far-reaching. In October 1932, the LNHO's Health Committee considered Olsen's report alongside other evidence from health administrators, and health and social workers that offered further confirmation of deteriorating social conditions. At Rajchman's behest, the Health Committee passed a resolution 'to study the effects of the crisis on public health, with particular reference to conditions of under-nutrition produced by the crisis', and called for the LNHO to devise a programme of study.[64] This led to a six-point plan grouped under the banner, "Repercussions of the Crisis on Public Health":

> 1. Statistical methods to study the effects of depression on public health.
> 2. Ways to study individual nutrition.
> 3. Ways of ensuring healthful nutrition on a reduced income.
> 4. Ways to safeguard health by the co-ordination of the work of all available public and private public health institutions.
> 5. The effect upon public health of the migration of unemployed from the cities to places with inadequate sanitary provisions.

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[63] S.M. Horrocks, 'The Business of Vitamins: Nutrition Science and the Food Industry in Interwar Britain', in Kamminga and Cunningham, *Science and Culture of Nutrition*, pp. 235-58, pp. 242-8, 252.
[64] LONA, League of Nations, *Report on the Physiological Bases of Nutrition by the Technical Commission appointed by the Health Committee*, 6 Dec. 1935, p. 3.

6. The psychological effects of the depression.[65]

The nutritional studies amongst these (1, 2 and 3) are the featured subjects here. The agenda was ambitious and it expanded in new directions, both methodologically and geographically. It also demonstrated the LNHO secretariat's new approach whereby it began to define health concerns associated with unemployment and the Depression independently rather than be directed solely by the wishes of national authorities through the Health Committee. The secretariat then sought to establish ways in which to tackle those concerns. In one vital new strand of the enquiries, the state of nutrition of the unemployed, very limited data existed. It was decided that the best means of determining accurate information was through household surveys, but it was far beyond the capabilities of the LNHO to conduct the surveys themselves. Thus, the LNHO decided to fund individual enquiries simultaneously in many European countries, a move that established that it was also breaking free from its self-imposed western geographical straitjacket. With a Polish Director, the swing to the East was perhaps less surprising but a Health Committee – and a League – that was dominated by western states, and their money, still needed convincing that it was a worthwhile exercise. In other areas, too, the LNHO embarked on pioneering research by not only funding but also conducting their own studies in Romania and Yugoslavia into a nutritional wasting disease, pellagra, which was caused by a deficiency of vitamin B_3 (niacin).[66] This latter research was a precursor to the development agenda that was to emerge after the Second World War.

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[65] Bodleian Law Library, Oxford, O.LN per.1, League of Nations, *League of Nations Official Journal*, Feb. 1933, Work of Health Committee during 19th session, Oct. 1932, pp. 354-5.

[66] S. Rabinowitz, 'Pediatric Pellagra', accessed 16 June 2010 at, http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/985427-overview.

The LNHO's starting point though was to establish some methodological cohesion and standardization. It immediately arranged two conferences of experts in 1932; the first, the Rome conference (mentioned above, p. 230) consisted of a small group of physiologists and statisticians presided over by Cathcart.[67] Attendees included Professor Gorter from the University of Leiden, Dr Helene Lippay-Wastl (who had carried out some preliminary nutritional investigations for the LNHO before Aykroyd joined), and Professor Luigi Carozzi of the ILO's Industrial Hygiene department. The LNHO's new approach to nutrition with its shift towards preventative health, investigation of diets, and particularly its concern for the unemployed was warmly welcomed by the ILO. The main aim of the conference was to reach an 'international agreement' with regards to different calorific and food requirements for adults and children of all ages, as that was the path to international comparability.

However, the conference's conclusions revealed the difficulties confronting the LNHO in its attempts to standardize methods and approaches, which became a recurring problem during these initial stages of investigation. It was precisely because nutrition was breaking new ground that experts found it difficult to come to agreement. The committee pronounced, for instance, that although it was happy to offer a scale of family coefficients, the many variations between countries, class, height, weight, and the type of work performed prevented it from being able to create something 'which represents real values'. It added bluntly that 'no pretence of absolute accuracy could be made'.[68] The simplicity of the final scale was justified by the committee on the basis that researchers and statisticians may be reluctant to use it if it was overcomplicated. Some

[67] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, Conference of Experts for the Standardization of Certain Methods Used in Making Dietary Studies, *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization*, Geneva, Vol. I, No. 3 (Sep. 1932), pp. 477-83.
[68] LONA, R 5866/8A/36440/1409, Report of the Experts in Connection with the "Standardisation of Certain Methods Used in Making Dietary Studies", presented to the 19th session of the Health Committee, Sep. 1932.

of the committee's conclusions were more definitive, though. It suggested that dietary studies should include the consumption of specific food groups: animal and vegetable protein, in addition to calories, total protein, carbohydrate, and fat; the type of bread and the degree of milling; types of vegetable; and alcohol (for calorific purposes). Nonetheless, the conference was held by some to be a disappointment and it also appeared that researchers generally ignored the scale of family coefficients that it had produced.[69]

The second conference of experts organized by the LNHO on "how to study individual nutrition" was held in December 1932 in Berlin and was presided over by Professor Gorter. The Health Committee arranged this conference because it was aware that national enquiries investigating the effects of the crisis on health were already underway, with yet more in preparation. It was thus considered desirable to find agreement on a uniform methodology amongst those carrying out the various studies to enable comparability between surveys. Specifically, it aimed to identify the best methods of picking up early clinical signs of deteriorating health brought on by the crisis, specifically malnutrition. The *QBHO* published the report of the conference in June 1933.[70]

Taking heed of the warnings outlined in Olsen's report "Depression and Public Health", the Berlin conference affirmed that whilst the Depression had not impacted directly on mortality and morbidity rates, evidence of increased illness amongst the unemployed and their families was evident and nutrition among certain groups had deteriorated. Moreover, the situation had worsened during the winter of 1932-3 so that 'the resources of the unemployed and assisted persons of all categories are in certain regions so scanty' that they were no longer able to provide an 'adequate

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[69] LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, McGonigle to Aykroyd, 22 May 1933, in Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, p. 383.
[70] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'The Most Suitable Methods of Detecting Malnutrition due to the Economic Depression', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization*, Geneva, Vol. II, No. 2 (Jun. 1933), p. 116-29.

diet'. The situation was now grave and there was an 'urgent need to determine the extent of the danger which threatens public health'. The experts split in to two groups to consider separate approaches to the problem: one which concentrated on the actual consumption of diets; and the second which looked at medical examinations that were used to determine an individual's physical condition.[71]

The results, like the Rome conference on family coefficients, were not entirely convincing. Aykroyd, for one, thought that it fell short of expectations. It failed to decide upon a uniform methodology noting that 'there were no exact methods for ascertaining the effects of the Depression on family living conditions in general and the nutrition of individuals in particular'.[72] Moreover, the conference's report was somewhat equivocal about the value of household surveys. Studies into the consumption of foodstuffs in the home could only be very approximate as it was difficult to be certain of, for instance, the consumption of additional resources outside of the home. The best method to ascertain the state of health and nutrition of the individual, it concluded, was by direct medical examination but this was time-consuming and expensive, and, therefore, unlikely to be used extensively in the fiscally-constrained 1930s.

Nonetheless, the report offered definitive suggestions for household surveys noting that supplementary data on social conditions were useful additions to information gained by the method of medical examination. It recommended using a wide range of subjects including all official social, medical, and economic statistics e.g. levels of unemployment, unemployment allowances, and morbidity rates, as well as data from social insurance organizations, such as mutual benefit societies, to provide an overall picture of the extent of the effects of the Depression in a particular

[71] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'The Most Suitable Methods', pp. 116-18.
[72] LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, Aykroyd to Crowden, 7 Jan. 1933; Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'The Most Suitable Methods', p. 120; Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, p. 384.

area. From this information, it hoped that more detailed enquiries were to follow. It also set out various criteria which should be investigated including: employment status; socio-medical information; personal circumstances such as wages, housing situation, personal hygiene conditions (e.g. clothing), diet, and leisure time. For medical examinations, the committee declared that its preferred choice for large-scale clinical investigations were the methods devised by the Austrian Clemens von Pirquet. These included assessments of the 'colour of the skin, the subcutaneous fat, the water content of the skin, the body weight and the condition of the muscles'. Other techniques such as those used by school doctors to record weight and body measurement could be used to supplement von Pirquet's methods if desired. Its final recommendation was that all aspects of the enquiries should be conducted by trained public social or health personnel and that the LNHO and the ILO should offer assistance to any authorities that desired help. Furthermore, the committee hoped that the various authorities would forward all results to the LNHO.[73]

Despite Aykroyd's dissatisfaction with the outcome of proceedings, he agreed that the adoption of von Pirquet's methods was a positive step that would enable comparability between studies.[74] Moreover, the LNHO used the conference's recommendations as the catalyst to broaden its enquiries into the extent of nutrition problems by looking into the state of nutrition among the unemployed and their families in Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, and the USA, many which the LNHO funded directly. These were completed during 1933 and 1934. The LNHO also pressed a number of other countries, including Turkey and Yugoslavia, unsuccessfully. The study in Vienna revealed a significant difference in weight and physical development, especially amongst the young, between the unemployed and their families, and the employed. In Romania, too, as part of the pellagra research,

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[73] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, League of Nations, 'The Most Suitable Methods', pp. 119-126.
[74] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, p. 384.

the household survey in Osoi found that diets were ‘deficient in many respects besides the p [pellagra] factor’. In Poland, however, a study carried out in a Warsaw suburb concluded that there was little difference between the unemployed and employed.[75] That the results communicated to the LNHO were inconclusive perhaps explains why the LNHO made no attempt at a collective evaluation of these studies.[76] The ILO, on other hand, were not deterred by the inconsistent results of household budget surveys and continued to use them throughout the 1930s as a means of establishing and assessing patterns of household consumption.[77]

The third part of the LNHO’s six-point programme set out plans to investigate ‘ways of ensuring healthful nutrition on a reduced income’. To this end, the LNHO conducted a number of short enquiries during 1933 and 1934. One, by Dr M.D. Mackenzie of the LNHO’s secretariat, “The Administrative Machinery by which the Adequate Nourishment of the Poor is Ensured in Great Britain”, was surprisingly sanguine. In the five areas of England and Scotland that were investigated – Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and Willesden – none demonstrated any evidence of ‘undernourishment’.[78] The reasons, he sensed, were due to services provided by various public authorities, such as unemployment allowances and relief, and the measures implemented by the Ministry of Health. Where unemployment and other allowances were insufficient to secure an adequate diet, the children of the unemployed were entitled to free

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[75] LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, Note on the Enquiry Undertaken at Vienna (Austria) into the State of Nutrition of the Unemployed and their Families presented to the 21st Session of the Health Committee, 9 May 1934; Aykroyd to Ciuca, 16 July 1934; Szulc to Olsen, 9 May 1934, Provisional Report of the Enquiry on Nutrition of the Unemployed in Poland.
[76] LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, Podzimkova to Aykroyd, 20 June 1933; Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, p. 384.
[77] See, for example, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, ‘The Belgian Family Budget Enquiry of 1928-1929’, *International Labour Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (July 1934), pp. 81-8; International Labour Office, ‘Recent Family Budget Enquiries: The Shanghai Family Budget Enquiry of 1929-1930’, *International Labour Review*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Aug. 1935), pp. 230-41; International Labour Office, ‘Recent Family Budget Enquiries: Family Budget Enquiries in Japan 1926 to 1934’, *International Labour Review*, Vol. 32, No. 5 (Nov. 1935), pp. 665-81.
[78] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, M.D. Mackenzie, ‘The Administrative Machinery by which the Adequate Nourishment of the Poor is Ensured in Great Britain’, *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization*, Geneva, Vol. II, No. 2 (June 1933), pp. 333-52, p. 334.

school meals and milk. Mackenzie concluded that physiologically the health of the unemployed was 'satisfactory'. However, he added one notable qualification: he believed that the 'psychological effect of unemployment at present constitutes a much more serious and difficult problem.'[79] In view of the LNHO's earlier references to the psychological dangers of unemployment (see pp. 215-16), it was even more surprising that the LNHO did not pursue this line of enquiry in its broader examination of the "Repercussions of the Crisis on Public Health".[80]

A second study by Aykroyd, "Diet in Relation to Small Incomes", was, on the other hand, far less optimistic. It also marked a crucial new phase for the LNHO. In contrast to its previous approach whereby the LNHO only offered specific recommendations to a national government when it had been invited to do so, the LNHO took on the role of making general and public pronouncements to governments and policymakers. Aykroyd's report explicitly targeted a wider audience stating that its aim was to help 'those who are concerned with the safeguarding of public health during the present crisis'. In this manner, the potential to cast a critical gaze over government policies was opened up. Aykroyd's article, for instance, stated categorically that 'widespread malnutrition' existed amongst those where income had fallen to a 'very low level', a view, he said, that was 'held by many'.[81] His use of the term malnutrition – in contrast to Mackenzie's preference for undernourishment – exemplifies the evolving attitudes towards food quality rather than quantity.[82]

But, as with the ambiguous conclusions that emerged from the Rome and Berlin conferences, Aykroyd had to concede that the science at the time was inconclusive. Physiologists,

[79] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, Mackenzie, 'The Administrative Machinery', pp. 335, 341.
[80] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, pp. 364-5.
[81] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, W.R. Aykroyd, 'Diet in Relation to Small Incomes', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization*, Geneva, Vol. II, No. 1 (Mar. 1933), pp. 130-53, p. 130.
[82] J. Vernon, 'The Ethics of Hunger and the Assembly of Society: The Techno-Politics of the School Meal in Modern Britain', *The American Historical Review*, 110, No. 3 (June 2005), pp. 693-725, p. 701.

he noted, had yet to agree on what constituted an adequate diet or the required daily calorie intake. As he admitted, ‘for the purposes of the present article, the quite *arbitrary* figure of 2,500 calories (gross) is taken as representing the daily requirements of an average unemployed man’ (emphasis added). Aykroyd revealed, however, that research had made some notable advances. ‘Basal metabolism’ had established the amount of calories required to survive: a ‘seventy kilogramme man absolutely at rest in a warm chamber expends, in order to keep the body “ticking over”...energy equal to 1600 to 2000 calories a day’. Tests had also shown with ‘reasonable accuracy’ how much energy was used carrying out certain tasks, although Aykroyd again admitted the lack of certainty when assessing different kinds of physical work.[83]

Aykroyd’s analysis also looked at working-class family budgets and diets in England and Germany and the cost of a ‘satisfactory’ diet, according to his daily approximation of 2,500 calories. He also compared unemployment allowances as of March 1933 with the cost required for an adequate diet, taking into account that children over the age of five received free school meals in England. He calculated that a cheap diet for a single man required 36% of his unemployment allowance but that rose to 63% for a man with a family of three children. In Germany, a single German man spent 43% of his income but that increased to 83% for a family with one child and 79% for a family of four or five.[84] Even with the disclaimer that supplementary income was not included in these estimates, the high percentage of income required for food substantiated the disturbing thesis first outlined by Olsen in “The Economic Depression and Public Health” that vulnerable groups, especially the unemployed, had to be suffering from malnutrition.[85]

[83] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, Aykroyd, ‘Diet in Relation to Small Incomes’, pp. 130-4.
[84] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, Aykroyd, ‘Diet in Relation to Small Incomes’, pp. 143, 148.
[85] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, p. 386.

Aykroyd was also engaged on a number of other projects. He wrote two short internal papers on the institutional control of diets, continuing the theme of emphasising the quality of diets. The first, "Diet in Danish Residential Institutions",[86] showed that it was not new for governments to use the latest science when feeding large groups of people while the second, "Oslo School Feeding", discussed the merits of the 'Oslo Breakfast', the term coined for the work of Dr Carl Schiøtz in transforming the provision of school meals in Oslo. In 1927, Schiøtz, at the time Chief Medical Officer of Schools in Oslo, criticized the hot meals served in Oslo's municipal schools and suggested an imaginative new approach: a cold breakfast consisting of whole wheat bread, cheese, margarine, an apple, and milk. The idea was based on the fact that this breakfast provided more calories and was 'richer in vitamins and mineral salts'. Its success led to the scheme being rolled out in other towns in Norway.[87] His reputation enhanced, Schiøtz soon became renowned as one of the preeminent nutritionists in Scandinavia and later sat on the LNHO's Commission of Experts on Nutrition that was appointed in late 1935.

An innovative development in the LNHO's work was its investigations into pellagra. Following earlier studies in the USA by Carl Voegtlin and Joseph Goldberger that had, by 1914, deduced that pellagra was due to some unknown nutritional deficiency, they were a natural fit with the LNHO's studies on malnutrition.[88] Approved by the LNHO's Health Committee in October 1932, the studies were conducted during 1933-34 in Yugoslavia and Romania and directed by Aykroyd. As well as being driven by the potential benefits to public health and Rajchman's sympathy towards Central and Eastern Europe, the League was influenced by the international political context. It had invested heavily in the nation-states that had emerged from the collapsed

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[86] LONA, R 6074/8A/2133/2133, Jan. 1934.
[87] LONA, R 6074/8A/2133/2133, Jan. 1934.
[88] G. Rosen, *A History of Public Health* (New York, 1958), pp. 389-91; E.V. McCollum, *A History of Nutrition: The Sequence of Ideas in Nutrition Investigations* (Cambridge, MA, 1957), pp. 302-18.

Austro-Hungarian, German, Ottoman, and Russian empires. Not least, the EFO had helped to secure stabilization loans during the 1920s in Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia.[89] Whilst this had certainly caused tension – the presence of a League Commissioner to monitor the application of the loan conditions had imperial undertones and was seen as an infringement on national sovereignty – the League kept a watchful eye over ongoing developments in the region. The collapse in agricultural prices in the late 1920s that presaged the onset of the global Depression caused the League to take a much broader view of the problems affecting central and eastern European societies, and particularly those in rural communities.[90] The consolidation of the Nazis' power in Germany provided an urgency to those efforts in an attempt to prevent the recently established European states falling directly into Germany's orbit.

For the study of pellagra, Aykroyd knew that it predominantly affected maize-eaters, especially those who were very poor, and that an improved diet seemed to alleviate the symptoms. Aykroyd first travelled to Romania in June 1933 to survey the extent of the problem and to meet senior health officials and researchers. He formulated the dual-approach of studying the aetiology of the disease and 'the best method of prevention'. Romanian officials agreed and a joint venture between the Romanian government and the League of Nations was officially approved.[91] Aykroyd chose to concentrate on a relatively small area and opted for the village of Osoi in north-eastern Romania with a population of approximately two thousand inhabitants, which suffered from a high annual incidence of pellagra. The aim was to undertake a comprehensive investigation that could serve as 'a genuine scientific contribution to the subject', incorporating material on pellagra that

[89] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 25-33.
[90] See pp. 176-8 on rural hygiene; Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 26-33.
[91] LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, Aykroyd to Balteanu, 7 July 1933.

Aykroyd had accumulated from Europe, Egypt, the USSR, and the USA, which he then planned to bring together and publish.[92] With the advent of the *QBHO* in 1932, the LNHO had developed a natural outlet to publicize its activities although its readership was never, in fact, ascertained.[93] In fact, in late 1934 the editor of the *QBHO* pressed Aykroyd to publish an article on the pellagra investigation in Romania as soon as possible. Aykroyd agreed that it would provide good publicity in Europe and the USA but he considered it too soon as the enquiry in Osoi was still underway at that time.[94] The LNHO did not have to rely on its own means for publicity, however, as it was also able to benefit from the burgeoning global network of nutritionists and other interested medical personnel. The Rowett Institute's *Nutrition Abstracts and Reviews*, edited by Boyd Orr, for instance, published an article on Aykroyd's pellagra research in 1933.[95]

The practical work in Osoi, initiated in the winter of 1933, involved two strands. The first was the painstaking daily recording of family diets over a six-month period on a group of twenty-two specified families, who had previously suffered particularly high incidences of pellagra. The second was to provide yeast to a bakery that the LNHO had established to distribute bread to the village. For a three month period from the end of March 1934, 500g per day was provided to the 'intensively studied' twenty-two families and 300g per day for every other family in the village to test if a substitute cereal for maize, in this case whole wheat bread, could reduce or eradicate the symptoms of pellagra.[96] In the summer of 1934, Aykroyd returned to Osoi to evaluate the results of the initial experiment and to witness conditions at the time when the incidence of pellagra was at or near its highest. The experiment revealed impressive declines of 60-70% from the previous

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[92] LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, Aykroyd to Wilson, 13 Sep. 1933, Aykroyd to Ciuca, 16 Nov. 1933; Aykroyd to Dojmi, 21 Dec. 1933.
[93] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, pp. 295-6.
[94] LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, Aykroyd to Nitzulescu, 10 Oct. 1934.
[95] W.R. Aykroyd, 'Pellagra', *Nutrition Abstracts and Reviews*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Oct. 1933), pp. 337-44.
[96] LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, Aykroyd to Ciuca, 16 July 1934; Aykroyd to Wilson, 13 Sep. 1933; Aykroyd to Baillif, 20 Sep. 1933.

year, which 'convinced' Aykroyd and his co-collaborator at the Institute of Hygiene, Iaşi that the consumption of whole wheat bread even for short periods alleviated pellagra. But they knew that the scientific community would not be satisfied with such a small data sample and would require further verification. The best way to proceed, they concluded, was to continue the experiment for another year.[97]

Aykroyd arranged to meet with the Romanian Minister of Health and his assistant, who were both 'extremely interested' in the findings and 'anxious' to see the research continued. In the autumn, Aykroyd, as promised, updated them with new proposals. In addition to repeating the wheat experiment for one more year Aykroyd wanted to supply 20,000 kilos of wheat for sowing in the area. Aykroyd made three further suggestions: a more extensive study of malnutrition as the family dietary surveys in Osoi had revealed that diets were 'deficient in many respects'; to send an agricultural expert to Osoi to help educate the former peasants in wheat production and other areas of 'gardening' such as growing vegetables; and the Institute of Hygiene in Iaşi should assume control of the pellagra hospital in Romania to ensure that all clinical material was available for research. The Romanian authorities accepted Aykroyd's proposals and the study continued for another year.[98]

The second pellagra study, in Yugoslavia, proceeded differently in that whilst the LNHO funded the enquiry it assigned a Yugoslavian expert, Dr Lovro Dojmi of the Institute of Public Health in Mostar, to conduct the investigation. Nevertheless, Aykroyd suggested that Dojmi follow the identical methodology to Aykroyd's study in Romania. The pellagra studies in Romania and Yugoslavia were only one strand of the LNHO's substantial body of work on nutrition but they

[97] LONA, R 6074/8A/11860/2133, Boudreau to Secretary-General, 3 June 1934; LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, Aykroyd to Ciuca, 16 July 1934.
[98] LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, Aykroyd to Alexa, 8 Oct. 1934; Aykroyd to Ciuca, 16 July 1934.

illustrate four key points. Firstly, the LNHO's relationship with the Romanian health authorities and research institutions was based on collaboration. The LNHO controlled the study through its funding of the operation (as it did in Yugoslavia), it followed the frameworks and methodology set out by Aykroyd, and the LNHO sent out its own expert, Ciuca, to Osoi, but Aykroyd worked closely with Romanian medical researchers and the study relied on local personnel to carry out the daily family diet enquiries. In fact, Aykroyd chose the area specifically because it was 'covered by a demonstration Health Centre' with nurses that visited every family.[99] Whether the villagers of Osoi welcomed the nurses who came in to their homes to conduct the diet enquiries is another matter. The LNHO was also in constant communication with the Romanian authorities, who incidentally had a change of government in late 1933 that Aykroyd at one point feared might derail the study. It was a pre-requisite for success that the LNHO functioned in this manner and fostered good relationships, otherwise its operation would have been terminated. The League had no right to insist on any action in a sovereign state and all of the League's technical organizations had to be invited by national governments. The LNHO had to tread carefully because of the suspicions that lingered over the League's Commissioners. The League's actions were couched in humanitarian imperialist terms, after all.[100]

A second point of interest was that Aykroyd and the LNHO wanted to find solutions to fit local conditions; it was not designed to be a one-size-fits-all approach. For the Romanian experiment, they considered but declined the distribution of 'milk, meat or yeast' as not only impractical but undesirable. Aykroyd for one was fundamentally opposed to 'palliative' measures and believed that the aim of a public health policy should be to improve the diet through local produce. He realized that there were inevitable exceptions, the impossibility of acquiring vitamin

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[99] LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, Aykroyd to Wilson, 13 Sep. 1933.
[100] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, p. 33.

C in frozen climates, for instance. But the experiment to substitute whole wheat bread for maize was based on the premise that if it was successful it could become 'an anti-pellagra policy', and farmers whose diets predominantly consisted of maize could switch production, partially or wholly, to another cereal.[101]

The third point is that, rather obviously, the LNHO was breaking through geographical boundaries. It had not become a global operation but attention was being shifted away from the West. Pellagra was no longer a major health issue in Western Europe but continued to be a serious problem for parts of southern and eastern Europe. The approval by the Health Committee and the League of Nations of the LNHO's studies in Romania and Yugoslavia confirmed that the League's perspective was broadening. Fourthly, the implications of a successful pellagra experiment for the LNHO were immense. Whilst not losing sight of their immediate goal, 'to eradicate pellagra in Osoi', the LNHO hoped, as Boudreau explained to the Secretary-General Avenol, that this experiment would have 'a much greater than national significance'.[102] It was a fundamental shift in approach in which the LNHO, by carrying out its own research programme, was embarking on embryonic development.

The culmination of this phase of the LNHO's work was the decision by the Health Committee in the summer of 1934 to authorize a general report aimed at consolidating all the work on nutrition hitherto carried out by the LNHO. Published in June 1935 in the *QBHO*, "Nutrition and Public Health"[103] was another important milestone for the organization. It sought to broaden

[101] LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, Aykroyd to Wilson, 13 Sep. 1933; Aykroyd to Harris, 22 Oct. 1934.
[102] LONA, R 6050/8A/921/921, Aykroyd to Ciuca, 25 Oct. 1934; LONA, R 6074/8A/11860/2133, Boudreau to Secretary-General, 3 June 1934.
[103] Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford, per. 1672 d. 93, E. Burnet and W.R. Aykroyd, 'Nutrition and Public Health', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organization*, Geneva, Vol. 4, No. 2 (June 1935), pp. 323-474.

exposure of nutrition as a public health issue and, in a demonstration of its authority, the LNHO placed itself at the centre of this debate. Nutrition, the report declared, was no longer merely a physiological problem but a complex interplay of health, social, economic, and agricultural factors. Moreover, it stated that the report was aimed specifically at 'public health authorities'.[104] The direct appeal to national governmental institutions underlines that the LNHO believed that its role had evolved to one that was no longer constrained to offering advice on an individual basis to national governments, but was rather, by 1935, willing to promote an international agenda. The report was used by a nutrition network, with Stanley Bruce at the helm, to promote the issue of nutrition during 1935 and ultimately to ensure that nutrition appeared on the agenda of the League of Nations' Assembly in September of that year. A three-point resolution requested that, in addition to the continuation of the LNHO's studies into the health aspects of nutrition, the EFO, the ILO, and the IIA should accumulate and distribute all available information regarding government actions to improve nutrition, and establish a committee comprised of agricultural, economic, and health experts to consider that material and produce a general report on the various aspects of nutrition.[105] This body was the Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition (hereafter Mixed Committee).

The Interconnectedness of Nutrition 1935-7: A Multi-Agency Approach

i. The Creation of a Nutritional Network

Weindling has said that the LNHO's nutritional studies, whose outcomes were felt from 1935 onwards, was by that time less about the Depression than nutrition being 'the key to physical

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[104] Burnet and Aykroyd, 'Nutrition and Public Health', p. 326.
[105] LONA Geneva, Com.Mixte/Alim./2, Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition, Preparatory Documents, First Session, Feb. 1936.

and mental fitness'.[106] The 1935 Assembly resolution, however, was about even more than this new definition of health; it was also a means to promote economic and social development. This was only possible due to a sustained effort by a network of key individuals who sought to bring nutrition on to the agenda of the League's Assembly and the International Labour Conference. In addition to the secretariats of the LNHO, the EFO, and the ILO, this network was augmented by a British peer and government minister Earl De La Warr, British officials, especially E.M.H. (Ted) Lloyd, Bruce, and Frank McDougall.

A close inspection of this network offers an intriguing insight into the workings of the League and the ILO's secretariats and their collaboration with outside officials and experts who were sympathetic to the League and the aims of its technical agencies. After defeat at the 1929 Australian general election, the ex-Prime Minister Stanley Bruce was appointed as High Commissioner to Britain, 1933-45, whence he also served as the senior member of the Australian delegation to the League of Nations, 1932-9, and sat on the League's Council, 1933-6. Bruce was thus well versed in the machinations of the League and enjoyed a favourable reputation for his valuable work and efforts there. He was, nonetheless, critical of the League, particularly its avoidance of the important affairs of state, and felt that it was more useful as a source of personal connections, especially British government ministers, in view of his concern for his homeland.[107] McDougall, who worked as an economic advisor for Bruce from the early 1920s, was a farmer and a member of various agricultural groups, including the Australian Dried Fruits Association and the Empire Marketing Board, as well as being a member of the Commonwealth Council for Scientific Research and the Commonwealth Development and Migration Commission. He also

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[106] Weindling, 'The Role of International Organizations', p. 327.

[107] H. Radi, 'Bruce, Stanley Melbourne (1883-1967)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography,* published in Vol. 7 (1979), accessed 20 Nov. 2009, at http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bruce-stanley-melbourne-5400.

worked with the League in multiple roles, originally as an agricultural expert from the mid-1920s and thereafter as a member of numerous League committees, including Australia's representative to the EFO's Economic Committee, the Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition, and the EFO's Depression Delegation. He was a close confidant of Loveday throughout his long association with the League, perhaps Loveday's closest ally.[108]

McDougall's background in agriculture ensured that he interpreted the significance of nutrition through its link to primary production; his support for nutritional studies was, therefore, undoubtedly marked with self-interest. He wanted to address, as he called it, the 'paradox' of underconsumption of food with 'apparent' agricultural overproduction.[109] Bruce admitted, too, that the Australian intervention at the League was based on economic and not humanitarian grounds. Henri Queuille, a Radical French senator who held various posts during a long career in politics, including Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Public Health (and President of the Council in three ministries after the Second World War), certainly believed as much. Queuille, who was also a member of the Mixed Committee on Nutrition and chaired the French national nutrition committee, opined that the League's resolution on nutrition had 'undoubtedly been guided in the main by agricultural considerations'. E.P. Cathcart also felt that the nutrition agenda was being pushed by agriculturalists, bluntly stating that he 'dislike[d] intensely this tying together of nutrition and agriculture by doing "sob stuff" on nutrition for the masses'.[110] Australia, along with many other agriculturally-dominated economies, had suffered greatly from the late 1920s due to their dependence on exports of agricultural produce. As prices of these products fell

[108] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 166-71;
[109] ILOA, T 127, Unpublished paper by McDougall, 'Can Improved Nutrition Solve the Agriculture Problem?', 6 Nov. 1935.
[110] LONA, R.C.N./Alim./1st Session/P.V.1, Minutes of the first meeting of the Representatives of National Nutrition Committees, Feb, 1937; ILOA, T 127/1000/2, Committee of Experts on Workers' Nutrition, Second Session, 9-10 Apr. 1936.

precipitously in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the loss of revenue created a vicious downward spiral whereby declining incomes of agricultural populations led to lower consumption of manufactured goods, which in turn reduced the purchasing power of urban populations and their consumption of agricultural produce.[111] Governments all over the world had, of course, responded to this sequence of events by imposing ever more rigorous protectionist measures as fiscal measures to balance their budgets and to protect the revenues of their home agricultural industries. Sharply falling wholesale prices suggested that overproduction was the cause of the problem so governments hoped that import restrictions would limit supply, which would lead to higher prices and increased revenues.

But the argument to improve nutrition was persuasive because it was a policy that was so simple in design, if not in practice. The biochemists' contention that most people's diets were lacking in vitamins and minerals was be solved by switching (some) production from cereals to what they called 'protective' foods that were high in protein, vitamins, and minerals; that is, from cereals to livestock, poultry, fruit, and vegetables. Improved diets through increased consumption of protective foods would also result in a simultaneous increase in cereal prices through lower production. Where the production of protective foods was not possible due to climate, geography, or soil conditions, cereals could be used as fodder for livestock.

However, even the best ideas required access to an audience and the question was how best to promote the idea internationally. If Bruce's political contacts were invaluable when it came to lobbying for the nutrition cause, the driving force behind nutrition came from within the League and ILO. The previous two sections have demonstrated Rajchman's desire to focus on nutrition as a major element of social medicine but he was ably supported, for different reasons, by Loveday

[111] ILOA, XI 8/3/2, Nutrition: Report Submitted by the Second Committee to the Assembly, 25 Sep. 1935.

and Butler. Loveday, like McDougall, saw improved nutrition as a means to promote agricultural development, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. Butler, on the other hand, thought that improvements to nutrition should form a critical element of social policy. Rather than a simplistic approach to overcome underconsumption through raising income, which all parties understood would not have gained any favour with employers (wages) or national governments (unemployment benefits), Butler, along with his colleagues in the ILO, and McDougall, were convinced that the only way to proceed was to present a convincing case for raising food consumption.[112]

Rajchman, Loveday, Butler, Bruce, and McDougall met together in early 1935 with the specific aim of trying to propose a resolution at the ILC of June 1935 and later, in September, at the League's Assembly. Communications followed between the above and numerous other officials in the LNHO, EFO, and the ILO that saw ideas, memos, and reports exchanged on the economic, agricultural, and public health benefits. The ILO's Fernand Maurette discussed a draft resolution for the ILC in April 1935 with Rajchman, who in turn forwarded it to Stoppani and Loveday, both of whom thought it 'truly excellent'.[113] Just as the resolution at the Assembly was proposed by Bruce (representing the Australian government), Sir Frederick Stewart, the Australian representative to the ILO, submitted the resolution to the ILC. The ILO's resolution called attention to a number of issues: an adequate diet was 'essential to the health and well-being of the workers and their families'; evidence showed that many people, in both urban and rural area, were suffering from malnutrition; and increased food consumption would improve 'standards of life' and help to alleviate the agricultural depression. The resolution also called for collaboration

[112] ILOA, T 127, Note on a meeting of ILO officials with McDougall, 12 Mar. 1935.
[113] ILOA, T 127, Note on meeting of ILO officials: Problems of Nutrition, 25 Mar. 1935; LONA, R 6074/8A/17649/2133, Rajchman to Carozzi, 16 Apr. 1935.

between the ILO and the EFO, LNHO, and IIA.[114] Maurette also sent draft chapters of the ILO's report *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy* to Rajchman as they were completed. Rajchman forwarded these drafts not only to senior colleagues like Burnet and Stoppani but also to other interested parties within the nutrition network.[115] It was very much a collaborative, multi-agency project.

Outside of Geneva, two other important advocates that were prominent in seeking to influence the nutrition debate were the British peer and minister, Earl De La Warr, and the civil servant, Ted Lloyd. De La Warr was one of, if not the first, hereditary peer to join the Labour Party. He served in MacDonald's first and second governments before following MacDonald into the National Government in 1931 when he was appointed as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry for Agriculture and Fisheries. Although he was moved to the Board of Education in June 1935 after Baldwin had replaced MacDonald as Prime Minister, De La Warr continued to represent Britain at the League's Assembly, including during the September 1935 discussions on nutrition. Lloyd joined the civil service in 1913 and worked in the Ministry of Agriculture, the Empire Marketing Board, and, from 1933, was Secretary of the Market Supply Committee. Interestingly, like Loveday and a number of others in both the League and ILO's secretariats, Lloyd had worked in the war contracts department during the First World War and enjoyed a short secondment to the EFO during 1919-21. It was Lloyd's formative experiences in the war contracts department and in the Ministry of Food (where he had transferred in 1917) that convinced him of the need for economic controls and the importance of international cooperation; for Lloyd, the war had exposed the shortcomings of the unfettered market. After the war, he also became an advisor

[114] LONA, R 6074/8A/17649/2133, Provisional Record of the 19th Session of the International Labour Conference, 13 June 1935.
[115] LONA, R 6074/8A/17649/2133, Rajchman to Lorwin, 20 Apr. 1936; Rajchman to Lorwin, 21 Apr. 1936.

to the Independent Labour Party and wrote many articles for the liberal or labour-supporting press.[116]

In their communications with the LNHO, EFO, and the ILO, both De La Warr and Lloyd pointed out that the British government had not been a by-stander during recent developments in nutritional science; 2 ½ million school-children were in receipt of milk at subsidized prices and an experiment to grant one free school meal a day to twenty thousand schoolchildren 'in distressed areas' was about to commence. These activities were channelled largely through Lloyd's Market Supply Committee. Lloyd also told Butler how the Market Supply Committee was looking at the overproduction/underconsumption debate from the agricultural angle. Nonetheless, Lloyd admitted that the British government, despite its professed wisdom, suffered from a startling inadequacy of data and gaps in their knowledge; they lacked, for example, data on unemployment relief, the cost of living in other countries, or food consumption at different income levels. Lloyd admitted that any attempt at that time to ascertain the consumption of various foodstuffs was 'largely guesswork'. Following these revelations, confidential statistical data and analysis was routinely exchanged between officials and statisticians of the ILO and Market Supply Committee. Butler also tried to enlist De La Warr's support for the resolution at the ILC in June 1935 with Butler noting that it would add 'very great value if authoritative support were given by the British government'.[117]

In August 1935, the network moved feverishly to consider the appropriate strategy to ensure that nutrition would be granted an adequate hearing at the following month's Assembly.

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[116] F. Trentmann, 'Lloyd, Edward Mayow Hastings (1889–1968)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 15 Apr. 2011, http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2117/view/article/34566.

[117] ILOA, T 127, Note on a meeting between Butler and De La Warr, 18 Mar. 1935; Lloyd to Butler, 31 Jan. 1935; Note on a meeting between Butler and De La Warr, 18 Mar. 1935; Lloyd to Butler, 31 Jan. 1935; T 127/1/1, Burge to Nixon, 28 Apr. 1936; Nixon to Burge, 2 May 1936; XI 8/3/1, Butler to De La Warr, 28 May 1935.

Events in Abyssinia were certain to dominate proceedings that year so they had to be sure of a calculated approach. Seeking to gain French support for what was ostensibly an Anglo-Australian affair, Loveday met the conservative French economist Jacques Rueff and the French Minister of Commerce, Georges Bonnet. Disappointingly for Loveday, Rueff said that he had 'not heard about the nutrition problem' whilst Bonnet told Loveday bluntly that he was 'not interested'.[118] Undeterred, Loveday met again with Bruce, McDougall, De La Warr, and Lloyd while Rajchman met Boyd Orr to discuss draft resolutions and a brief written by Bruce.[119] De La Warr and Lloyd informed Loveday of the opposition within the British government to their plans. The Ministry of Health had established a nutrition committee in 1931, but the Ministry's reluctance to discuss nutrition publicly in relation to the Depression and unemployment formed part of their strategy to distance the science of nutrition from nutrition as a public health issue and malnutrition's socio-economic links.[120] The Ministry of Health was overruled, however, as De La Warr was granted permission to add British government support to the Australian resolution at the Assembly. De La Warr's commitment to the nutrition project should have come as no surprise to close observers; he had already paved the way in a speech early in the summer of 1935 demanding a more 'positive agricultural policy'.[121]

The efforts of this nutritional network were well rewarded as twelve delegations backed Bruce's resolution to discuss the nutrition question more fully. Such was the interest generated that a three-day debate in the Second Committee ensued involving twenty delegations.[122] De La Warr acted as rapporteur for the Second Committee meeting and appealed to the delegates to end

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[118] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, MSS Loveday 19/3, Diary entry 21 Aug. 1935.
[119] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, MSS Loveday 31/1, 1937, p. 26.
[120] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, MSS Loveday 19/3, Diary entries concerning Loveday conversations with Lord De La Warr and Lloyd, 19 Aug. 1935.
[121] *The Times*, 15 Jun. 1935, p. 15.
[122] ILOA, XI 8/3/2, Nutrition: Report of the Second Committee Presented to the Assembly, 25 Sep. 1935.

the breakdown between consumption and production that had led to agricultural surpluses at a time of desperate need for so many. He also stressed the benefits for public health to be gained by increasing the consumption of protective foodstuffs. Bruce was feted by many for his intervention as he argued that, despite advances in agricultural production (and agricultural surpluses), the continuance of diseases like beriberi, rickets, and pellagra showed that many people still lacked adequate nutrition. Furthermore, Bruce implored governments to refrain from subsidizing agricultural producers and instead to divert expenditure to subsidize consumption through, for example, the funding of school meals, the distribution of milk to schools, or the distribution of food to the unemployed, all of which, he said, would have the effect of increasing and diversifying agricultural production.[123] Together Bruce and McDougall termed this holistic approach to nutrition as the 'marriage of health and agriculture'.[124] Initiatives to improve diets were by no means new but the strategy devised by this nutritional network was successful because of its dual appeal as a potential solution to overcome economic and agricultural distress, whilst also offering considerable public health benefits. It won remarkable favour with press outlets all over the world.

Bruce's efforts to shape the nutrition agenda did not rest with his interventions at the Assembly and the Second Committee. He was also instrumental in persuading the Briton Viscount Astor, chairman of the Milk-in-Schools Advisory Committee and former parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Food and Ministry of Health, to preside over the Mixed Committee on Nutrition.[125] Commanding leadership for any committee of experts is undoubtedly crucial, especially a potentially unwieldy one comprising a professor of biochemistry, a medical scientist, a director of a central bank, professors of economics and statistics, politicians, diplomats, and

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[123] ILOA, XI 8/3/2, *League of Nations Official Journal*, Discussion in Second Committee, 19 Sep. 1935, pp. 103-05.
[124] LONA, Com.Mixte/Alim./2, Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition, Preparatory Documents, First Session, Feb. 1936.
[125] I. Cumpston, *Lord Bruce of Melbourne* (Melbourne, 1989), p. 147.

agriculturalists. Astor was a staunch supporter of the nutrition project who understood the complexity of the issue. In his opening address to the Committee in February 1936, he asserted that the 'social aspect of the problem is intimately associated with many of its economic aspects, and especially with questions of poverty and cost of living'. Astor left the Committee in no doubt as to his lofty ambitions: 'we shall outline to the world a policy full of hope for and promises of positive improvements in health – positive improvements in standards of living – positive improvements in contentment'.[126] He was by no means alone in his expression of hope for the Mixed Committee. In his final speech as President of the Royal Society of Great Britain in 1935, Frederick Gowland Hopkins said that the work of the Mixed Committee, if done correctly, could be of benefit to world peace.[127]

Rajchman, Loveday, Stoppani, and Fernand Maurette, the Director of the ILO's Research Division, continued the inter-agency collaboration. They had further communications to decide the composition of the Mixed Committee, their respective representatives to the Mixed Committee (the secretariats of the ILO, LNHO, and EFO each provided two members), and the candidates for their own expert committees. The Mixed Committee was thus structured to ensure that a number of the key advocates of the nutrition project were present: Mellanby represented the LNHO; McDougall represented the EFO; and Faith Williams (Chief of the Cost of Living Division at the American Department of Labour) for the ILO. Furthermore, Rajchman, Loveday, Stoppani, and Maurette decided to constitute a small committee with one representative from each secretariat to coordinate the work between their respective expert committees.[128]

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[126] LONA, Com. Mixte./Alim./16, Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition, Opening Address by the president, 7 Feb. 1936.
[127] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 165, League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition: Vol I, Interim Report*, p. 6.
[128] ILOA, T 127/1000/1, Meeting between LNHO, EFO, and ILO officials, 22 Oct. 1935.

ii. The Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition

Astor's ambitions were met with approval by the rest of the Mixed Committee which chose to avoid a narrow interpretation of the Assembly's resolution. It could have merely restated in uncontentious terms the various measures taken at the national level to improve nutrition but instead it plunged emphatically into controversial and political territory.[129] The only conservative option taken by the committee was to restrict itself geographically. It explained that due to a scarcity of data elsewhere it would concentrate on Europe, the British Dominions, South America, and the USA.[130] The committee held two extended meetings before publishing its *Interim Report* in June 1936 and then another in April 1937 before the release of the *Final Report* in August 1937. It outlined a diverse range of problems that it arranged into broad chapters in the *Final Report*: health, trends in food habits, agriculture, food prices and consumption, factors influencing food prices, income, and education. By their very nature, of course, many of these issues were interrelated. Commercial policy, for instance, directly affected both agriculture through prices obtained for the producer and consumption through prices paid by the consumer. Similarly, consumption was affected not only by prices, but by income.

The starting point, though, was health and here the Mixed Committee relied on the continued efforts of the LNHO. The Assembly's resolution of September 1935 instructed the LNHO to extend its scientific investigations into the relationship between nutrition and public health. As a result, the Health Committee decided to appoint its own Commission of Experts on Nutrition to coordinate all its future work. This Commission, chaired by Mellanby (who also sat on the Mixed Committee) comprised professors of physiology and biochemistry, directors of medical institutes, and nutritionists including Cathcart and Boyd Orr. Although some of the

[129] Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health*, p. 391.
[130] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 169, League of Nations, *Final Report of the Mixed Committee*, p. 32.

Commission's members warned that any recommendations should be conveyed in general terms given the huge variety of circumstances across the world, it became immediately clear that there was a powerful desire to formulate a global standard for optimum nutritional requirements. Mellanby stressed that it was 'not sufficient' to attain the levels laid down by governments for they were 'apt to regard "good" as a satisfactory result. This was wrong. "Excellent" should be regarded as normal'. Dr W. Sebrell, Chief of the Department of Nutrition at the National Institute of Hygiene, Washington agreed. The Commission 'in defining minimum requirements was not merely considering the bare necessities of life, but the optimum nutrition required, namely the nutrition required to secure optimum development'. He also believed that nutrition should be considered a major public health concern, an equivalent he said, 'of immunization against diphtheria.' Boyd Orr agreed with the emphasis on optimum nutrition 'in view of the abundant available food supplies', a nod to the underconsumption debate that was by then feverishly gaining ground in Britain.[131]

A notable development was the USSR's presence on the Committee of Experts. Although it is widely known that the Soviet authorities search for allies against the rise of Nazism took it into the League of Nations in 1934, it is rather less well-known that it also became involved with the League's technical agencies. Professor B. Sbarsky, Director of the Central Nutrition Institute, Moscow was allowed by the Soviet authorities to accept the LNHO's invitation to sit on the LNHO's Commission of Experts. There is no question that certain protocols had to be followed – correspondence between the League and Sbarsky went through senior Soviet officials – but this did not prevent the full and active participation of Sbarsky, and of the Soviet authorities, with the

[131] LONA, R 6134/8A/22155/20883, Commission of Experts on Nutrition, Minutes of the first meeting of the First Session, 25 Nov. 1935; LONA, R 6133/8A/21771/20883, Commission of Experts on Nutrition, Minutes of the first meeting of the Second Session, 4 June 1936.

Commission. Sbarsky complimented the LNHO's work and he informed Rajchman that he and his colleagues at the nutrition institute would collect and deliver available material on popular nutrition in the Soviet Union to present to the Commission. These included papers on "The Amino-Acid composition of Proteins and Their Nutritive Value for the Human Organism", "The Nutrition of Pregnant Women", and "The Question of the Assimilability of Various Kinds of Bread".[132] During the Commission's meetings, Sbarsky was an active participant offering advice on many occasions and he also provided information on conditions in the USSR, although Soviet propaganda was more the order of the day. Sbarsky attended both of the Commission's later meetings in 1936 and 1937, only missing one sub-committee meeting due to ill-health.[133] He was also present at the first session of the representatives of national nutrition committees organized by the LNHO in February 1937, a conference convened at the behest of an Assembly resolution of September 1936 that suggested coordination of the activities of national nutrition committees.[134] What is more, the Soviet authorities invited all the Health Committee members to the Soviet Union during the summer of 1936, a number of whom accepted the invitation.

The LNHO's Commission of Experts' recommendations were laid out in its report *Physiological Bases of Nutrition*.[135] A table of coefficients was produced that suggested diets for all ages from conception to adulthood, broken down into requirements for energy-producing foods and for protective foods. The levels it suggested were remarkably similar to current dietary recommendations: for protein, the requirement was 70-100g per day; for energy-producing foods,

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[132] LONA, R 6133/8A/20883/20883, Sbarsky to Rajchman, 16 Nov. 1935; LONA, C.H./Com.Exp.Alim./4; C.H./Com.Exp.Alim./4 (a); C.H./Com.Exp.Alim./4 (b).

[133] LONA, R 6133/8A/21771/20883, Minutes of the second session of the Commission of Experts on Nutrition, 4 June 1936; R 6133/8A/20883/20883, Sbarsky to Rajchman 16 Nov. 1936.

[134] LONA, R.C.N./Alim./1, R.C.N./Alim./4, Meeting of Representatives of National Nutrition Committees, 22 Feb. 1937.

[135] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 166, League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition: Vol. II, Report on the Physiological Bases of Nutrition*.

the base was established as 2,400 calories for adults of either sex ‘in a temperate climate and not engaged in manual work’, with supplementary calories per hour added for those carrying out manual labour. Unsurprisingly, with pro-natalist and nationalist voices so prominent during the interwar period, pregnant and nursing women received special attention and were granted separate requirements. They were described as those who required the ‘greatest protection in order to ensure adequate physical endowment for the child at birth and optimum nutrition during infancy’. Minor alterations to the coefficients appeared in a revised edition of the report in June 1936.

The key conclusions of the *Physiological Bases of Nutrition* concerned its emphasis on foods that contained ‘good protein’ and a high vitamin or mineral content. In this respect, it was following the path laid out by Aykroyd and Burnet in *Nutrition and Public Health* that emphasized that ‘deficiencies of modern diets are usually in the protective foods’. The report stressed that under different circumstances different types of food could be considered a ‘valuable protective food’. One example given was where the protein content was of a minimal or poor quality e.g. in an Asian diet based mainly on ‘polished rice or soya bean’ with a small amount of vegetables. In this case meat would be an important addition. The most effective protective foods were ‘milk and milk products, eggs and glandular tissues, green-leaf vegetables, fruit, fat, fish and meat (muscle).’ These were emphasized in a series of general recommendations in addition to suggestions to restrict certain foodstuffs, again with some elements that are recognizable in today’s recommended diets. These included limiting sugar and fat intake, ensuring a varied diet, restricting over-milled cereals, the importance of milk, especially for pregnant and nursing women and children, the need for fresh vegetables and/or fruit, and supplementary vitamin D where sunshine was inadequate e.g. cod-liver oil.[136]

[136] LONA, R 6133/8A/21287/20883, *Physiological Bases of Nutrition*, pp. 9-11, 17-20

The report *Physiological Bases of Nutrition* provided another landmark in the work of the LNHO in that a formula of nutritional standards for all ages was agreed internationally for the first time.[137] The conclusions were certainly controversial as the levels that it suggested for protective foods exceeded existing consumption by a considerable margin. This left governments who refused to set higher unemployment and maternity benefits to face potential charges of neglect. The Mixed Committee then used these recommendations as the basis for evaluating the state of nutrition. Its reports were unrestrained in their assessment: the 'evidence that inadequacy of diet is widespread is conclusive' and, moreover, it required urgent attention. Scurvy, rickets, pellagra, poor teeth, diminished growth, and weight deficiency were all evident.[138] Studies had revealed that the proportion of population that suffered from malnutrition was alarmingly high. A report by Boyd Orr of conditions in Britain, based on 1,152 family budgets, showed that people in the lowest of six income groups, or approximately 10% of the total population, failed to achieve the required standard for all of a diet's constituents based on the levels suggested in the *Physiological Bases of Nutrition*. The next income group, the next 20% of the population, received only the required levels of protein and fat. Boyd Orr's conclusions were supported by Warren Waite, Professor at Minnesota University who said that similar evidence had been uncovered in the USA.[139]

The Mixed Committee's *Final Report* went on to state that in all countries people remained vulnerable to the risks of malnutrition, although in some cases public authorities had intervened and offered direct assistance. As welcome as this intervention had been, it needed to be extended. Milk was crucial in this regard because its value was 'unique'. The provision of free or subsidized

[137] Borowy, *Coming to Terms*, p. 388; Weindling, 'Social Medicine', p. 145.
[138] LONA, Com.Mixte./Alim./37, Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition, First Session, Summary of the Discussion in the Plenary Meetings held 10-16 Feb. 1936; Report of the First Session (10-16 Feb. 1936), 3 Mar. 1936; Weindling, 'The Role of International Organizations', p. 327; Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 165, League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition: Vol I, Interim Report*, p. 15.
[139] Boyd Orr, *Food, Health and Income*, in Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 165, League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition: Vol I, Interim Report*, pp. 16-17.

milk was one of the most effective methods to supplement the diets of expectant and nursing mothers, and young and adolescent children. This was precisely the argument that Bruce had suggested: instead of subsidizing agricultural production with tariffs and quotas, governments should instead subsidize consumption. Other means of social provision were also available, such as school meals which could be either hot or along the lines of the 'Oslo Breakfast' (see p. 241). The report noted, however, that despite the spread of compulsory education some children were still unable to benefit from school meals and even if provision was available meals were not always prepared with regards to nutritional science.[140]

Having established that a public health problem existed due to poor nutrition, the Mixed Committee then revealed what it believed was the main source of that problem: poverty. 'It is not necessary to stress the relationship between income and adequacy of nutrition. It is, indeed, obvious that the greatest single cause of defective nutrition in any community is poverty and the ignorance which is often associated with poverty'. There existed an 'almost universal rule' that for the average wage-earner consumption of food increased with income and, since protective foods were more expensive, the diet of those on lower incomes consisted mainly of energy-producing foods. The *Final Report* quoted a food consumption study conducted by the Bureau of Labour Statistics in the USA which looked at the percentage of families that spent sufficient sums on food to achieve the level of a 'minimum diet' as devised by the Bureau of Home Economics. It showed that 'considerable proportions of the employed populations', particularly amongst African

[140] LONA, R 6074/8A/2133/2133, LNHO Introductory Note on the Work Accomplished by the League of Nations up to October 1935 presented to the Health Committee, 28 Oct. 1935; Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 169, League of Nations, *Final Report of the Mixed Committee*, pp. 41-3.

Americans, were suffering from 'malnutrition *owing to insufficiency of income*' (their emphasis).[141]

One group that was particularly vulnerable to poor diets were large families on low incomes. The evidence showed that milk consumption dropped markedly amongst these families so the report recommended strengthening social provision through 'family allowances, the provision of supplementary food, education and other means', with particular emphasis on increased milk provision for children. Public assistance to subsidize food consumption for the poor was one method of attacking the problem of poverty. The other method was to increase the income of the poor by increasing their share of the spoils of economic growth and/or with wealth redistribution. This was far more controversial terrain since there was no hiding from the fact that redistribution was politically controversial. The Mixed Committee extolled the virtues of policies that had aimed to protect lower incomes groups through minimum wage legislation, family allowances, and social insurance for sickness, the aged, and the unemployed and, moreover, it stressed the desire 'to emphasize the great importance of the extension of such social legislation'.[142] Nonetheless, the committee took great care over this issue. Social insurance was, after all, contributory and the report made no explicit demands for greater wealth distribution. That task it left to the ILO (see section iii, p. 272).

In addition to highlighting the factors affecting underconsumption and offering recommendations on the demand side of the equation, the Mixed Committee also examined the supply of food and agriculture. Here, the aim was to encourage agriculture to diversify production

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[141] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 165, League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition: Vol I, Interim Report*, p. 77; Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 169, League of Nations, *Final Report of the Mixed Committee*, pp. 242, 246-7, 268.

[142] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 169, League of Nations, *Final Report of the Mixed Committee*, p. 265; LN 165, League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition: Vol I, Interim Report*, pp. 40-1, 81.

from cereals to livestock, poultry, fruit and vegetables. European agriculture was ideally suited to this, the *Final Report* stated, since it was dominated by many small landowners, particularly since land reform in Central and Eastern Europe after the First World War. However, the report noted that it could only be achieved through evolution not revolution as it understood the innate conservatism of farmers and landowners. Thus, it was important to spread information of the benefits of improved nutrition, which it was hoped would increase consumer demand with supply then adapting to that demand and thus taking advantage of the considerable potential to increase production.

The key question, though, was would agriculture be able to adapt? The *Final Report* believed that evidence from history showed that it was indeed possible. Competition from outside Europe in the latter decades of the nineteenth century due to the new technologies of large steamships, mechanization, and refrigeration had led to a surge in food imports to Europe from Australia, New Zealand, and North and South America. As such, European farmers had been forced to adapt and to shift production to other foodstuffs. Denmark's experience illustrated that cereal production need not even necessarily decline whilst these evolutionary changes took place. Agricultural production diversified towards livestock farming but Denmark's cereal producers actually converted from cereal production for human consumption to animal feed instead. More generally, agriculture had also shown itself to be proactive in improving nutrition employing the latest agricultural science to improve yields by adopting new crop strains, increasing soil fertility, combating disease, improving methods of animal husbandry, and mechanization. Many examples of substantial progress were available: in Denmark, milk yields had increased from 1350 litres per

cow in 1870 to 3200 litres by 1934, whilst in Estonia yields had increased from 2015 litres in 1923 to 2500 in 1933.[143]

Despite the Mixed Committee's optimism, it acknowledged that there were many barriers to changing production. The most obvious impediment was nature as some areas were simply constrained by geography or climate. Irrigation could extend cultivation onto more marginal land but human intervention was effective only up to a point. Poor distribution and marketing also often hindered farmers because it pushed up costs and priced consumers out of the market. Both agriculturalists and consumers also often complained of large margins, a problem especially true of protective foods because they were more perishable. Protective foods required suitable refrigeration, storage, and transportation at all stages from the farm to the retail outlet but only in the USA were large-scale warehouses common. Two actors were identified by the Mixed Committee as being crucial if significant change was to be achieved. The first was the state. The upgrading of transport links was a government responsibility, be it local or national, for the investment required was vast. Improvements, though, offered the potential for real cost reductions by speeding up distribution. The second actor was cooperatives. The report noted that the benefits of cooperatives were well-known and far-reaching. They offered farmers the opportunity to combine resources, for example, sharing machinery or cattle sheds, the ability to reduce costs through bulk purchases of fertilizer and feed, and access to education and training. The *Final Report* 'attached great importance to their encouragement and development'.[144]

But cooperatives were not always able to help farmers overcome one of the most critical and enduring problems that they faced: a lack of capital. Historically agriculturalists had great

[143] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 169, League of Nations, *Final Report of the Mixed Committee*, pp. 154, 175-7; LN 165, League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition: Vol I, Interim Report*, pp. 88-9.
[144] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 169, League of Nations, *Final Report of the Mixed Committee*, pp. 46, 165, 170, 238.

difficulty accessing capital, more so than other industries, because returns were low, unpredictable, and the extended life-cycle of production meant that they were slow to yield results. As a result, banks were reluctant to lend to farmers.[145] Since the core tenet of the campaign to improve nutrition was to diversify production, which required substantial financial injections because upfront costs were considerable, the *Final Report* was compelled to offer solutions. The previous work of the EFO offered some hope in this area. In the 1920s, the EFO had examined, in collaboration with the IIA, the issue of the shortage of capital for the International Economic Conference held in Geneva, May 1927 (the results of which were published in the 662 page monograph *Agricultural Problems in their International Aspect*).[146] The investigation had revealed how cooperative credit organizations, where they existed, had attempted to provide capital, but invariably farmers were still unable to acquire sufficient and affordable long-term credit and resorted to short-term loans at high interest rates. Moreover, the impact of the First World War had placed an enormous strain on capital causing even greater scarcity in the 1920s. Whilst the war was initially positive for agricultural communities as governments that were desperate for food encouraged intensified production, it was latterly devastating as much farmland and property was destroyed which, in turn, required large-scale reconstruction. Furthermore, land reforms in Central and Eastern Europe had broken up large estates into individual, much smaller plots which, although indubitably beneficial to former peasants by releasing them from their duty to their landowning masters, had also led to increased demand for working capital as most had no savings on which to draw.[147]

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[145] Bodleian Law Library, Oxford, O.LN/IIA.1938.24, L. Tardy (League of Nations), *Systems of Agricultural Credit and Insurance* (Geneva, 1938), pp. 7-8, 36.
[146] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 26, League of Nations, International Economic Conference Report, *Agricultural Problems in their International Aspect* (Geneva, 1927).
[147] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 26, League of Nations, *Agricultural Problems*, pp. 652-5.

The precipitous declines in agricultural prices that began in the late 1920s prompted renewed and swift action on agriculture. The League, ILO, and IIA conducted numerous investigations during 1930 and 1931: the Economic Committee, in conjunction with the IIA, conducted a special report on the agricultural crisis;[148] a Conference on Agricultural Credits was held in Warsaw for Eastern European countries attended by representatives from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia; the Commission of Enquiry for European Union (CEEU) established a Sub-Committee on Agricultural Credits; and the Financial Committee, also in consultation with the IIA, devoted a considerable amount of its work during 1930 to agricultural credit.

These preliminary investigations led to the appointment of a special delegation comprised of members of the Economic and Financial Committees, the IIA, and other experts on agricultural credits to investigate the creation of an international credit institution. In early 1931, the delegation proposed the formation of the International Agricultural Mortgage Credit Company, which was approved by the League's Council on 21 May 1931. The company would provide short, medium and long-term loans secured against first mortgages with national credit institutions but, crucially, with government guarantees to back these institutions. Bonds would be issued by the International Agricultural Mortgage Credit Company against the debt of the national agricultural credit institutions, which would allow them to be tradable on the international money markets. Further government support, it was suggested, would be available through fiscal privileges.[149] The international credit scheme was an ambitious attempt to overcome economic nationalism by freeing up capital. Interestingly, the scheme also revealed how conditions in other parts of the

[148] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 133, League of Nations, *Report of the Economic Committee on the Agricultural Crisis* (Geneva, 1931), p. 14.
[149] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 131, League of Nations, *International Agricultural Mortgage Credit Company*, pp. 6-7.

world, in this case central and eastern Europe, were reflected back to western Europe. The International Mortgage Company was designed not just to aid poorer agrarian countries of Europe but was also expected to be of benefit to farmers in the richer north and west.

The International Agricultural Mortgage Credit Company failed to come to fruition, however. Most governments refused to ratify it even though it had been signed by the League's Council in May 1931. The political will of the 'major' powers was obviously lacking at that time, although it was never a dead issue for the League or IIA. It also had its supporters amongst less developed countries. In September 1932, the Stresa Conference 'urged' that the institution be introduced as soon as possible.[150] Moreover, the Mixed Committee on Nutrition returned to the problem of agricultural credit and government intervention. In the *Final Report*, it noted that since a lack of capital was still the greatest impediment to a farmer switching production, it wanted to 'emphasize...the need for an improvement in agricultural credit' and explicitly called for national intervention to create funding. 'We hope that the appropriate national authorities will, in framing their general nutrition policy, give weight to the necessity for developing agricultural credit institutions in countries where adequate machinery does not already exist'.[151]

Agricultural credit was one policy area where the Mixed Committee extolled the positive benefits of direct and proactive government action. But there were others too. The Committee turned its attention to commercial policy where, it stated, that the impact of national polices on nutrition had been almost wholly negative. The arguments, of course, had been rehearsed on many occasions; the Economic Section's primary focus was, after all, trade and commercial policy and from its inception it had worked tirelessly to promote international trade and to reduce

[150] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 160, League of Nations, *Systems of Agricultural Credit and Insurance*, p. 33.
[151] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 169, League of Nations, *Final Report of the Mixed Committee*, pp. 45-6, 167.

protectionism. The *Final Report* covered at length the various means and the harmful effects of agricultural protection. It increased prices and restricted trade, and protectionism, designed to protect home producers, did not protect small-scale farmers who had to purchase fodder crops to feed their livestock. More worryingly, huge tariffs on crops such as wheat, combined with milling regulations and import licences, had forced up the price of bread which, because it was a staple component of diets, had inelastic demand. That is, consumption stayed relatively stable even when the price increased. The result was that the consumption of other foodstuffs fell to pay for the increased proportion spent on bread. Ultimately, the report warned, since all forms of protection increased prices, the effect on nutrition was negative. The problem was especially grave for protective foods as they had elastic demand i.e. consumption would fall significantly as prices rose.

Since the EFO had enjoyed little success persuading national governments of the harmful effects of protectionism, the Mixed Committee had to unearth a new line of reasoning. It 'urged' that the authorities consider nutrition when devising commercial policy noting the 'powerful weapon' to improve health at the disposal of governments. It acknowledged the motive behind trade policies – to protect home agriculture and collect revenues – but it expressed hope that as people became increasingly aware of the effects of poor nutrition on health, governments would be more willing to consider nutrition as they formulated economic and trade policies. The report gleefully cited the example of the Estonian government that had significantly reduced duties on fruits in 1937 for the purposes of trying to increase consumption. Privately, Loveday expressed the potential for nutrition to act as the driver for commercial policy rather than merely be a

consideration, hence his approach to the French Commerce Minister Bonnet when seeking allies to raise the profile of nutrition at the League Assembly in the summer of 1935.[152]

One final area where the Mixed Committee pressed for government action was education. The view of most governments, backed up by certain experts such as E.P. Cathcart, laid more emphasis on ignorance, rather than poverty, as a cause of poor nutrition. The *Final Report* acknowledged that education had a greater impact further up the income scale where research had shown that some families on similar incomes consumed inadequate diets whilst others achieved the necessary standards. It agreed that education and propaganda, through all available public, voluntary, and private agencies, was an important strategy of any national nutrition policy and should be directed to the medical profession, the public, and to the farmer. The importance of educating the 'small farmer' to the nutritive benefits of protective foods was first and foremost as a consumer, but it was also to encourage them to see the benefits of agricultural diversification.[153] Nonetheless, the *Final Report* left the reader in no doubt that it placed poverty above all else as the main cause of widespread malnutrition.

The *Final Report* was a document with an assuredly confident tone. The Mixed Committee was unequivocal in its views, it stressed the interconnectedness of the issues affecting nutrition, and it showed an understanding of the concurrent political repercussions that were required for a fiscally, economically, and socially more redistributive and proactive state. Nutrition, it said, offered 'a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge to men's consciences and an opportunity to eradicate a social evil by methods which will increase economic prosperity'. What is more, the *Final Report* carried criticisms of public authorities' previous endeavours. Governments had acted

[152] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 169, League of Nations, *Final Report of the Mixed Committee*, pp. 50, 212-25, 230; Nuffield College Library, Oxford, MSS Loveday 39, Loveday to Sweetser, 8 July 1936.
[153] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 165, League of Nations, *The Problem of Nutrition: Vol I, Interim Report*, pp. 21-3, 38, 77; LN 169, League of Nations, *Final Report of the Mixed Committee*, pp. 47-8, 291-2.

to improve nutrition, it stated, but their efforts had not gone 'nearly far enough', and was even 'checked and obstructed at certain points'. The eventual aim was simple: an 'adequate' diet for all.[154]

iii. The ILO and Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy

The ILO's work on nutrition is considered separately to that of the Mixed Committee because the nutritional network that worked so hard to promote the nutrition agenda specifically granted the ILO the opportunity to present the state of workers' nutrition in a separate document. As with the Mixed Committee, the ILO did not include information from Asian, African, or South American countries – except Japan – due, once again, to a lack of data. Nutrition had never been a major focus for the ILO, as Butler admitted, and it was only in 1935, in anticipation of Aykroyd and Burnet's report "Nutrition and Public Health", that it took up the question 'systematically'.[155] Of course, trade union participation ensured that those who worked for or with the ILO were only too aware that a large proportion of wage-paid labour, even in the richest countries, struggled to feed, as well as house and clothe, themselves adequately. But that narrative had always concentrated on insufficient income which meant that the question of a diet's quality rested fundamentally on wages. Most national governments were reluctant to concede that this was true and there were always employers' representatives, such as Adriano Olivetti, Secretary-General of the Fascist Industrial Federation and acting director of the Olivetti Company, who even contended that workers' incomes had increased during the 1930s.[156] Thus, the LNHO's identification of the devastating human consequences of the Great Depression and its efforts thereafter to ascertain the

[154] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, LN 169, League of Nations, *Final Report of the Mixed Committee*, p. 32-3, 49.
[155] Butler, *The Lost Peace*, p. 32.
[156] ILOA, T 127/1000/2, Committee of Experts on Workers' Nutrition, Second Session, 9-10 Apr. 1936.

requirements for an adequate diet, backed up by scientific evidence, offered the ILO a unique opportunity. After all, it fit neatly with the ILO's core mantra of social justice. The ILO subsequently turned its attention to family budgets and food consumption, a long-established tradition that was developed in the mid-nineteenth century by Pierre Guillaume Frédéric Le Play, which sought empirical evidence to establish the validity of its claim that many workers – employed and unemployed – were indeed suffering from malnutrition.[157] The ILO had begun to identify best practices of family budget investigations from as early as the mid-1920s but it became reenergized by the LNHO's nutrition campaign, and thereafter it published family budget enquiries regularly, conducted by national investigators, in the *ILR*.[158]

The ILO published its findings in *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy* in the summer of 1936. Although it was unambiguous concerning the message that it wished to convey, that income was the crucial factor affecting diets, it nonetheless sought to validate its argument through the appointment of its own Committee of Experts on Workers' Nutrition. But this was not the normal expert committee with a remit for conducting a new investigation; rather, this committee was a sounding-board for the ILO's own work on nutrition, which it had already began and intended to publish. Several chapters were in draft form before the committee was even established.[159] Not all the members of the Committee agreed with the ILO's central point on income, however. Notwithstanding the views of Olivetti, Cathcart continued to argue that the most important factor affecting a diet was education and attention should be directed at influencing entrenched habits.[160]

[157] ILOA, HY 801, Note on conversation between Mackenzie and Carozzi, 16 Feb. 1933.
[158] ILOA, International Labour Office, *Methods of Conducting Family Budget Enquiries*, Studies and Reports, Series N (Statistics) No. 9 (Geneva, 1926). Also, see, for example, Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, 'Recent Family Budget Enquiries', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 28, No. 5 (Nov. 1933), pp. 635-72; International Labour Office, 'Belgian Family Budget Enquiry', pp. 81-8; International Labour Office, 'The Shanghai Family Budget Enquiry', pp. 230-41; International Labour Office, 'Family Budget Enquiries in Japan', pp. 665-81.
[159] ILOA, XI 8/3/2, Draft outline of chapter for 'Nutrition and Social Policy', 10 Aug 1935.
[160] ILOA, T 127/1000/2, Committee of Experts on Workers' Nutrition, Second Session, 9-10 Apr. 1936.

Cathcart was critical of a draft chapter 'Nutrition and Labour' and explained to Maurette that he 'could not agree to be associated' with the report as it stood, and that he expected Durig, as a fellow physiologist, to agree with him. Durig, in part at least, agreed with Cathcart in that he saw nutrition as a two-fold problem of education and income with both needing to be addressed, but Durig's criticisms of the preliminary chapters were far less caustic. Lewis Lorwin, an American who had been appointed as Economic Advisor to the USA's Social Economic Service, sought to downplay this 'very important difference of views' during a session of the Committee of Experts. He noted that whilst the ILO acknowledged the other influences on diets, all the evidence from the ILO's studies showed that the single most important factor affecting nutrition was income, even in the 'most advanced countries'. Fritz von Bülow, Chief of the ILO's Agricultural Service, backed Lorwin affirming that it 'considered the principal cause of insufficient nutrition to be the impossibility of purchasing the necessary foodstuffs'.[161]

Other members of the ILO's Committee of Experts, though, needed less convincing than Cathcart of the relationship of income to food consumption. Faith Williams, offering a New Deal perspective from the USA, quoted evidence from a recently-completed survey of 11,000 families across different states that had shown that the percentage of income spent on food decreased significantly as income rose, an indication that resources were stretched at lower income levels. Malnutrition was also observed in 14% of the 209 families in north eastern states. Moreover, outlining the conclusions of a report by the Emergency Relief Administration in the USA, she said that relief allowances were 'as a rule...not large enough to provide for adequate nutrition'. These allowances were the responsibility of the individual states, but taken as an average nationally 'benefits per family...are well below the minimum adequate diet'.[162]

[161] ILOA, T 127/1000/2, Committee of Experts on Workers' Nutrition, Second Session, 9-10 Apr. 1936.
[162] ILOA, T 127/1000/1/1, Committee of Experts on Workers' Nutrition, First Session, 2-7 Dec. 1935.

The ILO admitted that *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy* was only a brief summary of the issues surrounding nutrition, based on data that was provisional and approximate, and that further investigations were required. Far more work, for instance, was needed on the distribution of family income and family budgets at different income levels, surveys that had been carried out only in the USA and Britain. But even with only 'approximate' information to hand, the report was unequivocal in its conclusion that income was 'at the root of the nutrition problem' and that the quality of diet rose with income. Consumption of meat, fish, milk, milk products, and eggs increased sharply with rising income, whilst that of cereals, bread, fats, and margarine – the cheap substitute for butter – decreased. This was seen across a range of 'race, habits, and climate'. Calorie consumption also increased as income rose which suggested a '*considerable potential quantitative demand for food, which would materialise in effective demand if the necessary purchasing power were put at the command of the groups concerned*' (their emphasis).[163]

The report explained that there were both old and new aspects to the nutrition problem. While it 'restated the need for abolishing poverty and for raising the standard of living of the workers', it placed the problem of poverty in a new context: the 'relation of nutrition to health'. This offered the potential for policymakers to direct 'social policy to objectively established scientific standards' as laid out in the *Physiological Bases of Nutrition* (p. 261), which in turn had a wider economic benefit. It still left room for diversity since the 'established' standards of diets were not exact and diets below that level were 'not necessarily inadequate'. What it could say with more certainty was that over the longer-term the consumption of a diet falling below those standards was 'inadequate for a "desirable" level of health and efficiency'. What's more, the data was collected from higher income groups and only the richest countries reached the standards

[163] ILOA, T 127/1000/1/1, Committee of Experts on Workers' Nutrition, First Session, 2-7 Dec. 1935; Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy*, pp. 50-65, 69.

advanced in *Physiological Bases of Nutrition*. Thus, the 'majority of workers on the world can be assumed to fall short of this ideal'.[164]

One interesting finding offers an explanation behind the desire to press for optimum standards for a diet. Data revealed that total national food consumption during the Depression years had changed little despite the massive impact of the Depression on prices and international trade. The report conceded that the figures were approximations – national food consumption was not limited to human consumption, for example – but it was nonetheless striking that at a time when individual consumption of protective foods fell, national consumption remained relatively constant. The report offered no specific explanation, but it had previously outlined that for those who remained in employment real incomes had actually risen (due to wages remaining stable or falling more slowly than prices), which quite probably led to increased food consumption but, for the unemployed, who had suffered a loss of part or all of their income, it was 'reasonable to assume' that they spent less on food and therefore that their diet had suffered. Even so, the effects of a loss of income, the report noted, had been mitigated to some or all extent by social welfare policies.[165]

Having established a substantial disparity between the 'scientifically established optimum standards of nutrition and the actual food consumption of large sections of the working population', the report considered agriculture's capacity to meet a potential increase in demand. Using statistics supplied by the IIA, the report proclaimed that 'in theory' there was enough spare capacity for food production to rise; much capacity was simply 'unused...misapplied'. This was based on the long-term rising trend of agricultural production since the late nineteenth century –

[164] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy*, pp. 1, 37, 52-3.
[165] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy*, pp. 69, 72-80.

barring the interruption of the First World War – mainly due to technological advances and more land coming under production. Moreover, the production of protective foods had developed even more rapidly than that of other food items. Although the depression conditions since the late 1920s, especially of cereals, suggested overproduction, an improvement in nutritional standards would 'no doubt tend to diminish if not eliminate the present problem of surpluses'. What the ILO was sure of, though, was that any improvement in nutritional standards could not be achieved by 'unilateral measures' taken by the consumer or producer, it had to be a coordinated approach. In effect, the fundamental relationship between the consumer and the producer rested on a confluence of economic factors: how to 'quantitatively and qualitatively' increase agricultural output whilst ensuring as wide a distribution of food as possible.[166] The problem was that this was at odds with the EFO's work on wheat production – pressed by producers – which had looked to regulate wheat markets.[167]

The ILO's report also looked to address one of the crucial outstanding questions: how to eliminate the gap between consumption and optimum levels of nutrition. One way was to lower costs. The Depression had demonstrated that the ultimate aim should not simply be lower food prices, but affordable food that did not hurt producers' incomes. This could be achieved by reducing production costs with increased efficiencies e.g. the use of the latest research, mechanization, lower distribution and marketing costs, and a more effective use of commercial policy. The other method of raising purchasing power was through increased income. The Mixed Committee on Nutrition encouraged the widening of social insurance legislation, but the ILO was more forthright and suggested the redirection of fiscal policy away from regressive indirect taxes

[166] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy*, pp. 81, 100-06

[167] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 115-16.

on consumption towards direct taxes on income. Indirect taxes, it asserted, were an easy policy option because they were less visible but they were 'undesirable from the point of view of public health and social justice' because they hit the 'lower income classes' harder. A more equitable distribution of wealth offered huge potential for improving nutritional standards. Citing the USA, it noted that 1% of the population enjoyed 23% of the total national income whereas the bottom 60% of the population only shared 23% of the national income.[168]

The problem of insufficient income, the report declared, offered a wonderful opportunity for government intervention. Much had been done already either directly through food provision e.g. providing milk to schoolchildren and nursing mothers, and the distribution of unemployment relief in kind or through social insurance. However, benefit payments were usually 'very modest'. The 1934 Unemployment Act in Britain, for example, set levels below those recommended by the BMA, although the Ministry of Health withdrew them for reconsideration after extensive criticism. The ILO was one of the main critics. The problem of workers' nutrition, the ILO's report stated, was 'an integral part of social and labour legislation' but, while governments had introduced policies to improve workers' nutrition, no government had made 'any attempt to consider general economic policies from the point of view of adequate nutrition'. The ILO thus called for a fundamental reassessment of the state's role using what could be described as the vocabulary of social rights. 'The most *essential* foodstuffs...are affected with public importance and should be dealt with as a public utility' (their emphasis); in fact, for children and expectant and nursing mothers it 'should be treated as a *social obligation* akin to that of public education' (emphasis added).[169]

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[168] Nuffield College Library, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy*, pp. 108-17, 167.
[169] Nuffield College, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy*, pp. 118, 120, 123-30, 132, 137, 140.

The report added that the state also had a role to play 'to promote and educate the desire for adequate nutrition'. It was propaganda, the report admitted, since it aimed at changing habits, but improving nutrition was surely an appropriate form of this state activity, especially since evidence suggested that such policies had been successful previously. The state should utilize not only national, regional, and local government agencies to educate the public, but also charitable organizations, cooperatives, employers, and trade unions. Cooperatives, for instance, had extraordinary reach and potential. The 1936 edition of the *International Directory of Co-operative Organizations* put the total of co-operatives at 487,750 with 44 million aggregate members. Many employers, too, were able to directly influence nutritional intake through canteens for their workers.[170]

Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy offered no conclusions as such. In fact, during the meetings of the Committee of Experts the secretariat had stressed that this account was intended to be only a beginning and to offer a summary of the issues. What it lacked in substantive evidence, though, it offered in definitive opinion. It called attention to the continuing levels of high unemployment, despite an upswing in economic activity in some countries, and stated that until there was recovery from depression sustained nutrition programmes were unlikely. But it also set out what could be done immediately and, in doing so, it linked improved nutrition directly with income redistribution. The 'further development and extension' of social insurance, it stated, must be regarded as of 'the highest importance'. Moreover, minimum wages and unemployment benefits could be set with reference to 'objective' nutritional standards established by scientific investigation.[171] The ideas on nutrition were picked up surprisingly quickly, although not in the

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[170] Nuffield College, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy*, pp. 119, 147, 151, 158-64, 168.

[171] Nuffield College, Oxford, X ILO, International Labour Office, *Workers' Nutrition and Social Policy*, pp. 166-9; ILOA, T 127/1/01/1/1, Note: Riches to Rasminsky, 14 Apr. 1937.

manner as they were intended. As Weindling commented, it was ironic that the studies that had been devised to promote improved health, were actually appropriated by state authorities to 'maintain civilian and military health' during the Second World War.[172]

[172] Weindling, 'The Role of International Organization', p. 329.

Conclusion

The Great Depression highlighted widespread deprivation and the inadequacy of welfare provision, but it also suggested that something was fundamentally wrong with the world's economic system. The technical agencies of the League of Nations and ILO, which sought desperately to keep a conversation going between states during the interwar period, were compelled to act as the fallout from the Depression was an existential threat. The national socialists and the communists appeared to have answers and the liberal internationalist order, embodied by the ILO, EFO, and LNHO, did not. The agencies had, though, grown in confidence through their functional successes in the 1920s, for instance, on working conditions, the EIS, and financial reconstruction. During the Depression, this encouraged a willingness to offer radical responses and to question the responsibilities of the state. For sure, the ILO was the first to react since its constituency, the (white, male, urbanized) worker, was most deeply affected by the desperate unemployment. Working true to its core mantra of practical action, it maintained its concerns over worker protection but it became much more focused on work creation. As Harold Butler observed about this new approach, improvements to labour conditions were no longer enough for the ILO because they were ineffective in finding work for the unemployed.[1]

For the ILO, the intellectual revolution in economic thought of the 1930s also proved that its instinct had been correct and that it had a role in creating and influencing economic policy. Through the work of its secretariat, notably by individuals such as Martin and Mitnitzky, it consistently sought intellectual justification for the ideas it promoted and it formulated its own telling contributions to the field of economics. The LNHO, too, carved out a new approach during

[1] Butler, *Lost Peace*, pp. 52-3.

the crisis. Its employment of the young, talented Aykroyd and its expansion into nutritional studies were already clear indications of its intention to enter the field of social medicine. But it was the long-term unemployment, which starkly highlighted the consequences of low incomes and poverty on the individual, that encouraged its determined Director Rajchman, its small yet effective staff, and its many collaborators to conduct wide-ranging enquiries into housing and nutrition.

But perhaps the crucial ingredient to the multi-agency collaboration was the EFO's conversion to a more mixed approach to social and economic policy. This enabled the three organizations to develop coherent strategies and policies. The EFO had been willing, at first, to see the economic crisis play itself out, as dictated by the rules of classical economic liberalism, much to the ILO's immense frustration. This compounded an already strained relationship as the two organizations clashed repeatedly over the ILO's competency to operate in the economic sphere. The tension gradually dissipated after Thomas's death, the blurring of the social and economic and, crucially, the EFO's acknowledgement that central government had the potential to make a positive contribution. By 1934, the EFO, too, had embarked on a new intellectual journey. It had already started to question monetary and fiscal orthodoxy in the late 1920s, initially with its reservations concerning the operation of the gold standard, but it was the continuing, massive consequences of the economic and political fallout of the Great Depression which proved too great to ignore. It began to investigate ways to prevent, or, at the very least, to mitigate the effects of, depressions. It came to accept that central government had a role to play in directing economic policy and that these policies could be directed towards trying to prevent other devastating episodes. Efforts thereafter were directed towards investigating and testing ways to prevent downturns in the business cycle. Interestingly, though, it also accepted the blurring of the

economic and social spheres and saw counter-cyclical intervention as a means to promote social, agricultural, and economic development.

The successes outlined here are, without question, relative. Whilst there has been a move in the last decade or so away from the longstanding, simplistic failure of the League to prevent the Second World War, it is still difficult to ignore the success or failure narrative that follows the League and ILO. After all, institutions are judged on results. The thesis has deliberately not set out to consider how these programmes were received at the national level, although the areas covered leave much scope for future exploration and analysis. It would, nonetheless, be a harsh critic that failed the League and ILO for being unable to persuade more governments to act decisively against unemployment and its effects. Decisions, after all, were taken by national governments as to whether or not they acted upon the League and ILO's advice. Nevertheless, there were significant failures, disappointments, and many parts of the world, and many people as a result, were overlooked. The ILO's plans to encourage international migration, for instance, made no progress whatsoever. Despite the ILO's continued efforts to bring both emigration and immigration countries together, the desire of nation-states to maintain control over their own borders remained powerful. With limited exceptions, the fractures and wounds caused by the First World War and the ever-increasing nationalist responses of the interwar period proved too much to counter. The EFO's conversion to see the potential benefits of state intervention during times of economic crisis to create employment was too late to have any impact on unemployment during the 1930s. Moreover, the actions of the technical agencies were directed almost entirely towards helping the 'white' world. Whilst Central and South America, thanks largely to the ILO's efforts, came more into the fold, Asia featured rarely and belatedly, and colonial and non-colonial Africa – apart from South Africa – was virtually ignored. Likewise, the technical agencies' solutions were very much

based around one view of the world, that of liberal internationalism, which appeared to be the only approach that was ever seriously contemplated. Other avenues such as socialism, communism, or Catholicism were, at most, fringe considerations although, interestingly, the USSR did become more involved with the League from the mid-1930s.

There is room, however, for alternative measurements of success. A recent approach taken by Pedersen professed that the League's success should not be measured by outcomes, but rather that the innovation was that these conversations took place at all. Issues that were deemed to be critical, sovereign matters were, as a result of the League and ILO's intervention, being internationalized.[2] That was, indeed, a significant leap in the context and conduct of international relations. Moreover, the establishment and survival of the League and ILO in the interwar period was an acknowledgement that nation-states accepted that there was a place, and space, for supranational bodies to exist. The argument that the institutions helped to 'rescue the nation-state' is valid in the global context, too.[3] It was an uneasy alliance and nation-states repeatedly pushed back – as they still do today – but the technical agencies were nonetheless asked to carry out certain tasks that nation-states had no desire to conduct or felt incapable of handling themselves. It is true, though, that if the advent of supranational bodies was indeed a successful innovation, the formidable challenges that the League and ILO faced also proved enduring. In this respect, the thesis does provide a commentary – which has a continuing validity – on the attitudes hindering international cooperation in a world of intense nationalisms.

There were also more enduring successes of the technical agencies. The establishment of the various United Nations bodies after the Second World War was surely a validation of, at the very least, parts of the League experiment. Indeed, there were notable 'continuities', including

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[2] S. Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford, 2015), p. 7.
[3] A. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-state* (London, 1992).

many personnel, although there were 'discontinuities' also.[4] The evidence has shown, too, that the ILO, EFO, and LNHO made a telling contribution to the ideas revolution of the 1930s. For sure, many of the ideas originated and were conducted at the national level but there were also combined efforts between national programmes and the League and ILO, and new avenues of investigation carried out solely by the technical agencies. Moreover, they pushed boundaries and often went beyond the remits outlined in League of Nations Assembly or ILC resolutions. They emerged as critics of government policies and they went beyond diagnosing the symptoms. Instead, they sought prevention and they devised new policy initiatives to advance the cause of lower income groups and to help people out of poverty. Many different people were involved in these efforts to act, firstly, against unemployment through creating work and, secondly, against the effects of that unemployment. And, yet, despite the at times trenchant criticisms by the technical agencies of economic and social policies of nation-states in the interwar period, the 'great powers' still decided to create new institutions along similar lines after the Second World War.

Linked to the establishment of these new organizations, and of even greater significance, perhaps, was that the League and ILO's efforts can be seen as proto-development. This was, indeed, a major innovation. The origins of development are more commonly associated with the FAO, WHO and World Bank, of course, although continuities have been noted, for instance, by Staples in *The Birth of Development*. Staples, though, couched the League's activities more as a continuation of the path of broader internationalism into the UN agencies, which had been evident from the late 19th century, rather than seeing the practical approach and programmes that the League and ILO promoted.[5] But if development was (and is) concerned with raising living standards through international cooperation, promoting economic development, reducing poverty,

[4] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, pp. 342-57.
[5] Staples, *Birth of Development*, pp. 70-6, 82-3, 129-31.

and encouraging the construction of public utilities, then the League and ILO were surely at least edging towards these goals.[6]

As has been shown, the League and ILO's ideas were not directed solely at combating the effects of cyclical unemployment; in fact, many investigations were conducted with the specific intention of taking them out of their national containers. In other words, they wanted to encourage broader economic and social development, including that of poorer states. The LNHO's study of pellagra in the small town of Osoi was a vanguard in this sense. Managed by its own staff – in collaboration with the Romanian health ministry and aided on the ground by Romanian health workers – it sought to help cure a longstanding deficiency disease by encouraging agricultural (and thus economic) development of the town. By encouraging small-scale farmers to switch production from the predominant maize to wheat, the LNHO aimed to help a community help itself. If there had been time to continue their work, the technical agencies may have well have looked to utilize these small-scale investigations as prototypes for global programmes. It is true that the investigations appeared to be based around the export of a 'western' model but the EFO, LNHO, and ILO often referenced the importance of recognizing local customs, including the cultural significance of food, so their intentions were not simply to find one-size-fits-all solutions. The LNHO was clear, for instance, that the intention of its research in Osoi was to find a local resolution. In fact, their approach can be contrasted favourably with post-1945 development.[7] Ultimately, it was the international technical agencies of the 1930s that were the forerunner of what was to follow after the Second World War: teams of experts identified and investigated social

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[6] W.C. Baum and S.M. Tolbert, *Investing in Development: Lessons of World Bank Experience*, p. 5; C.L. Gilbert and D. Vines, *The World Bank: Structure and Policies* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 5; R. Peet, *Unholy Trinity: the IMF, World Bank and WTO*, 2nd edn. (London, 2009), p. 130.
[7] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, p. 169.

and economic issues with the intention of taking up the best, workable solutions in an attempt to improve people’s lives.

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