Introducing the Oxford School of Industrial Relations (IR) & the Donovan public policy debate

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How did it all begin?

- With GDH Cole? The key Oxford link to the emerging post WW2 labour movement & influential in the early days of Nuffield
- 1947 when Hugh Clegg became Norman Chester’s Research Student at Nuffield?
- Summer 1949? At Cole’s instigation Clegg appointed Nuffield Fellow in IR & Allan Flanders University Senior Lecturer in IR
- & Formed a weekly IR Seminar at Nuffield
Why does it matter?
2 main reasons

(1) Created **a new academic social science field of IR**, following the US model, whose main centres shifted to Warwick & the LSE in the 1970s, under Clegg & Ben Roberts (& continues today through BUIRA & HRM in Business Schools)

(2) Addressed a crucial policy moment in the development of **social democratic corporatism** re. the role of trade unions
The Political opportunity: The 1964-70 Labour Governments

- New awareness weakness of British economy
- Modernizing pledge to free the ‘white heat of technology’ from ‘restrictive practices’ on both sides of industry
- A set of neo-corporatist *tripartite institutions* to manage ‘modern’ social democratic society
- TUC, NEDC (1963), plus from 1964
- George Brown DEA, NBPI, TUC Incomes Policy Committee, unified CBI (1965)
- Superstructure there: Donovan for the IR base?
The Donovan Report

- Oxford School project to reform voluntary collective bargaining/avoid legal regulation
- Corporatism ‘tested to destruction’ (Harrison)
- Who were the key Oxford IR figures?
‘The new Oxford Group’

‘Dialling 0092, the Oxford prefix is a performance you can predict of an editor who wants an article on the role of the shop steward, of an employer’s association which needs specialist advice, of a trade union seeking guidance. It is too a necessary ritual for a government department in need of an academic for a committee of inquiry into a strike.’ Has 5 men (very male IR world!)
Hugh Clegg (1920-95) Then 47

- Methodist Minister’s son & former Communist
- Builds a powerful research base & links to trade unions at Nuffield (1949-66)
- The key figure on Donovan: *The Clegg Version*
- *Warwick* (1967-79)
Allan Flanders (1910-73) Then 57

- Working class union activist & former TUC
- Ethical Socialist & key figure in the influential Socialist Union/Commentary group
- Regarded as the theoretician among empiricists
- Provided the key Donovan submission
Alan Fox (1920-2002) Then 48

- Working class, non-union background: Ruskin & PPE
- 1957-63 Nuffield Research Fellow
- Clegg union history,
- Lone scholar, not a public policy person
- Links to growth of Sociology & to 1970s Radical IR ideas
Bill McCarthy (1925-2012) Then 42

- Working class roots, Ruskin & PPE
- PhD with Clegg & Flanders on the closed shop
- Donovan Research Director, Arbitrator etc
- Politician & Labour Employment spokesman, Lords (1980-97)
Arthur Marsh (1922-1999) Then 45

- Least known: Delegacy of Extra Mural Studies (1948-64)
- Senior Research Fellow IR, St Edmunds Hall (1964-89)
- Specialist on Oxford engineering & trade union education
Wider circles...?
& near misses eg. Ben Roberts (Oxford to 1949)

- **Missing Economists**
  from most accounts:
  - Kenneth Knowles
  - John Corina
  - Derek Robinson

- **Oxford Outsiders**
  - *Ruskin* (John Hughes), *Barnett House, The Delegacy*

- Kahn-Freund (1964)
- Pat Thompson

- **The next generation**
  - George Bain
  - Willy Brown
  - Richard Hyman
  - Rod Martin
  - Roger Undy etc etc
Why did they have Impact?

- **A Pluralist theory** consistent with the needs of public policy
- Practical, applied **public policy solutions** & Nuffield links to main actors
- **Influential research**
  - Clegg, *Leverhulme* (1956), Flanders
  - *Fawley, McCarthy etc*
Representative figures of the post-war reconstruction generation

- Noel Annan, *Our Age: The Generation that made Post-War Britain*, 1990

- AH Halsey 1990: ‘the prejudices, predilections and politics of a generation which grew up in the slump years of the 1930s, was catapulted somewhat mindlessly into heroic war against fascism in the 1940s, fumbled towards an anti-Marxist social democracy in the 1950s, sought a post-imperial persona in the 1960s and struggled to find a new dynamic of post-industrialism in the 1970s’ (re. Alan Fox)