Constructing Post-Imperial Britain

Britishness, 'Race' and the Radical Left in the 1960s

Jodi Burkett

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Every effort has been made to trace rights holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publishers would be pleased to make the necessary arrangements at the first opportunity.

List of Abbreviations

AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
ANC	African National Congress
AWRE	Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (Aldermaston)
CARD	Campaign against Racial Discrimination
CDU	Campaign for Democracy in Ulster
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CSJ	Campaign for Social Justice
CUCaND	Colleges and Universities section of CND
DAC	Direct Action Committee
DCAC	Derry Citizens' Action Committee
DHAC	Derry Housing Action Committee
EEC	European Economic Community
INDEC	Independent Nuclear Disarmament Election Committee
ISC	International Student Conference
IUS	International Union of Students
MCF	Movement for Colonial Freedom
NCANWT	National Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons Tests
NCCL	National Council for Civil Liberties
NICR	Northern Irish Civil Rights
NICRA	Northern Irish Civil Rights Association
NUS	National Union of Students
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PD	People's Democracy
RSA	Radical Student Alliance
RSSF	Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation
SCA	Student Community Action
SCORE	Student Co-ordinating Committee for Racial Equality
STSTC	Stop the Seventies Tour Campaign
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence (for Rhodesia)
UNA	United Nations Association
UNESCO	UN Eductional, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USNSA	United States National Student Association
VSC	Vietnam Solidarity Campaign
WUS	World University Service

Introduction

In the spring of 2010 the Conservative Minister of Education Michael Gove sparked a public and academic debate about the teaching of British history, particularly the history of the empire, in British schools. He suggested that the history curriculum would be re-examined and amended

> so that we can celebrate the distinguished role of these islands in the history of the world, from the role of the Royal Navy in putting down the slave trade, to the way in which, since 1688, this nation has been a beacon for liberty that others have sought to emulate.[1]

This view of British history is the product of the post-imperial education system which sought to distance Britain from its empire. The debate about how the empire should be remembered and taught to British children is certainly not new, but recently there have been increasing calls from a variety of quarters for increased emphasis on the empire in British schools.[2] From the 1960s, as the empire began to unravel with Britain increasingly embroiled in bloody colonial conflicts around the world and the voices of colonised people increasingly heard calling for independence, teaching the 'glory' of the British Empire became untenable. In the last few decades of the twentieth century, therefore, very little was taught in British schools about the British Empire. Discussions about whether and how to teach the history of the British Empire feed into larger debates about what Britain was, and who the British were, without the empire. That debate is the focus of this book.

The British Empire was built over the course of several centuries in a piecemeal and sometimes haphazard fashion. The end of the empire followed a similarly piecemeal process with moments of decolonisation

followed by years of stasis. The period of the most rapid and widespread decolonisation, however, took place between the late 1950s and the mid-1960s. These years saw the independence of most of British Africa, the West Indies and many parts of Asia. While arguably the last British imperial war did not occur until the early 1980s, by the end of the 1960s the British Empire was largely seen as a historical or dated concept.[3] Partly this was the result of a desire to forget about the empire. As the empire was coming to an end there was a clear and widespread push to disassociate Britain from its imperial past. But, as Bill Schwarz has argued, this *desire* to forget was not necessarily accompanied by an *ability* to forget.[4] This inability to forget, the way in which the empire was lodged in the subconscious of Britons, is explored in this volume. The importance of the empire for Britain has never been straightforward. Debates continue to rage between economic historians about the cost of the empire and its relative benefit for Britain.[5] Similarly in the realm of social and cultural history there is an ongoing debate about the extent to which the general public, or to be more specific the working classes, were interested in or cared about the empire.[6] But until relatively recently it has been widely agreed, or assumed, that the empire ended without a great deal of interest from, or impact on, the British public. It was argued in many circles that the end of the British Empire and transition to the Commonwealth was 'successful' and relatively easy, at least in comparison to France.[7] This view began to change in the 1980s when the empire once again became a popular area of research.[8]

However, this increased interest in the history of the British Empire did not immediately result in an interest in the impact of the end of empire on the metropole. As Schwarz wrote in 1996 there was a 'stunning lack of curiosity about the impact of decolonisation within the metropolitan formation'.[9] There have been three major subsequent attempts to fill this void. In 2001 Stuart Ward took up this issue in an edited collection, *British Culture and the End of Empire*, which addressed the impact of the end of empire on a wide range of topics including film, sport, comedy and immigration, amongst others.[10] The objective of this book, according to Ward, was to show that 'the stresses and strains of imperial decline were not safely contained within the realm of high politics'.[11] This book, in all its varied chapters, challenged the prevailing notion that ignorance about the particulars of empire was the same as indifference towards empire. It has been clearly shown that the majority of British people did not know a great deal about the empire. However, this does not mean that the loss of empire did not precipitate wide-ranging and fundamental changes in the conceptualisation

and understanding of Britain and what it was to be British both internationally and domestically.[12] Wendy Webster, in *Englishness and Empire 1939–1965*, has also taken up the issue of the effect of the end of empire on English national identity. She traces some of the diverse cultural narratives of nation that allow us to understand more fully how the loss of empire was registered, arguing that through a study of mainstream media we can 'move beyond questions about the extent of people's ignorance to explore how far, and in what context and "unexpected places", imperial identity and loss of imperial power resonated in popular narratives of nation'.[13] Most recently Bill Schwarz has published the first volume of a three-volume series titled Memories of Empire which explores the lasting impact of the British Empire. In this first volume, *The White Man's World*, Schwarz examines constructions of whiteness arguing that the 'empire was never an entirely external process to Britain, and nor was decolonization'. Instead, he is convinced that ' "some impression" of this long history [of the British Empire] must have been present in the body political when the empire came to an end'.[14]

Constructing Post-Imperial Britain also argues that there were important lasting traces of the British Empire, and its demise, on British culture, society and the British people. Rather than looking to those who yearned for the return of empire, as Schwarz does, the focus of this work is on those people and groups who were fundamentally opposed to empire exploring how they attempted to reconstruct Britain as a post-imperial state. The important work that Webster and Ward, amongst others, have done in the last decade has focused in the main on traditionally understood cultural productions – on film, literature or television. This work instead will explore the impact of the end of empire on people and groups in that often forgotten space between high politics and the culture of everyday life – the social movement or extra-parliamentary organisation. Social movements often emerge in periods of transformation reflecting both dissatisfaction with the ways in which changes are being handled by existing structures and to develop shared beliefs and new foundations for society.[15] The organisations and groups that form part of these movements are places where people go to meet others with similar ideas to help them both make sense of the world around them and think about how to change that world. As della Porter and Diani argue, 'identity production is an essential component of collective action'.[16] It is in these places that historians can explore popular moods, can see what the 'hot-button' issues were and how these issues were articulated to appeal both to the public and politicians. Through

these movements and the organisations that define them we can explore how periods of crisis – such as the end of the British Empire – were reflected in changing attitudes and ideas about national identity.

Since the publication of Benedict Anderson's groundbreaking work *Imagined Communities* in 1983, historians, psychologists and social scientists have offered a number of ways of thinking about and analysing nationality and national identity.[17] The main contribution of history has been to show that national identity is never fixed, it is constructed and bounded by its specific context. It is in the way that this concept reflects and shapes a specific historical reality that makes it interesting to historians.[18] As Peter Mandler has pointed out, historians have been quite enamoured with the concept of national identity and have not always been clear about exactly what national identity is and how we can know it.[19] Mandler cautions historians about a number of assumptions that have been made about national identity, arguing that national identity is much more complicated than we often make it out to be.[20] Mandler is certainly right that we need to distinguish between internal identity formation, which we as historians can never fully know, and public displays of nationality which have been the bread and butter of our work.

This book examines the *idea* of 'Britishness' rather than the identity itself. It does not set out to explore individual identities or, necessarily, how people saw themselves, but how they rhetorically shaped the public contours of the notion of 'Britishness'. This work is focused on exploring and understanding conceptions of Britishness in a particular time and place as a political and cultural statement. Not all of the people discussed here would describe themselves as British, yet they all have an idea of what being British meant. This book is preoccupied with the outward statements of what it was to be British, statements about actions and activities that both government and individuals should undertake and those that they should not, rather than statements of personal identity. There is no one definitive definition of 'Britishness' given in this book. A quest for such a definition is fruitless and would miss the many nuanced and contradictory messages about Britishness that were formed by members of these organisations during the long 1960s. To define Britishness at the outset would therefore both be impossible and negate one of the key points of this book. This book seeks to explore the myriad ways in which organisations were engaged with popular debates about what post-imperial Britishness meant and attempted to construct a positive, active and progressive British identity for their post-imperial state.

'Race' and Britishness

As he entered a ballroom in Nottingham on 15 April 1969, Enoch Powell, MP for Wolverhampton South West, was greeted by a coffee hurled at him by a member of the crowd. Nearly one year after his infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech Powell had become the locus of discussion about the issue of immigration into the UK. Those who agreed with his views on immigration and British nationality used Powell and his public statements to justify their opinions. Those who disagreed with his views used his image to rally their supporters, showing him to be the personification of 'racialist' attitudes. Powell's 1968 speech discussed immigration in a way that had not previously been seen in public. He gave voice to a minority, but growing, fear of large-scale immigration of non-white people into the United Kingdom. Before Powell's speech immigration had been an important subject of political debate for nearly a decade. The first piece of postwar legislation restricting immigration into Britain, the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, was passed in 1961 and came into force in January 1962.[21] It was followed by a Race Relations Act in 1965 which took the first tentative steps towards outlawing racial discrimination in public places. Around the time of Powell's speech in 1968 a second Commonwealth Immigrants Act was debated and passed which set out to further restrict entry to the UK. This was quickly followed by a second Race Relations Act which widened the protection afforded those people who continued to be persecuted in Britain because of the colour of their skin. It was clear that throughout the 1960s 'race' and immigration were on the minds of legislators, both Conservative and Labour. Powell's speech brought this discussion out of the halls of Westminster and into the public arena in a new way. This was true because Powell's speech was about much more than immigration. It was about what it meant to be British, who was included and, most importantly, who was excluded.

There was a great deal of immigration to Britain in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. From 1948, with the landing of the *Empire Windrush* from the West Indies, this immigration was increasingly black people from the 'New Commonwealth'. It has been estimated that by 1958 there were 125,000 West Indians and 55,000 Indians and Pakistanis living in Britain.[22] Others have shown that the total number of immigrants from the Colonies and New Commonwealth countries ranged from just over 18,000 in 1954 to 46,000 in 1956, with the numbers increasing dramatically with the discussion of the Commonwealth Immigration Bill in the early 1960s.[23] These

numbers, however, are quite small in relation to other immigrant groups. Kathleen Paul has shown that there were many hundreds of thousands of European immigrants coming into Britain in the immediate postwar period.[24] The largest, and most stable, group of immigrants, however, came from Ireland. Paul Addison and Harriet Jones have estimated that in the second half of the 1950s 40,000 Irish immigrants were coming to Britain every year.[25] The widespread public concern about immigrants from the New Commonwealth was clearly not correlated to their relative numbers.

One crucial feature of British writing about race, and the place of 'non-white' people within the country, is that it quickly becomes a discussion about immigration. This equation of black people with immigrants took place between the late 1940s and mid-1960s and has not yet been successfully undermined, at least in popular discourse. There has been a significant amount of writing within Britain about the issue of immigration throughout the second half of the twentieth century and beyond. Within this vast literature there are three areas which are of particular importance to the present study. The first is that mentioned above – the conflation of the terms 'immigrant' and 'black' that occurred mostly in the 1950s and 1960s. The second is the identification of immigration as a problem, and the third the origins of racism. Despite the comparatively small number of 'non-white' immigrants coming into Britain, the terms 'immigrant' and 'black', which included Indians and Pakistanis as well as immigrants from the West Indies and Africa, became synonymous. Although the grouping of these different communities by the term 'black' was challenged in the 1980s, its contemporary usage is employed throughout this study.[26] Paul Gilroy associates the conflagration of the terms 'immigrant' and 'black', which he locates in the 1970s, with an ideology that saw the British race as 'bounded on all sides by the sea'.[27] While agreeing with Gilroy's argument, Anna Marie Smith disagrees with his timing. Instead she says that 'by 1964, Powell did not have to qualify the term "immigrant" with "black"; this equivalence had become a common-sense association'.[28] Kathleen Paul describes the impetus behind this conflagration of terms as deceptive. She argues that 'what was perceived as a race problem had to be disguised as an "immigration" problem – a much more politically and socially acceptable issue'.[29]

By making the issue an 'immigration problem' Britain could also be divorced of any responsibility for these people who were seen as 'foreigners' rather than parts of the British Empire or Commonwealth. Changing 'British subjects' into 'Commonwealth immigrants',

Paul argues, 'categorized them as outsiders with no automatic right to enter the country', and pushed their association with Britain into the background.[30] Smith agrees with this sentiment arguing that 'by renaming the colonized as "immigrants" ' these people were excluded from a country that was already "complete". Colonial subjects thus became ' "unknown" "strangers" in the land of their own making'.[31] The long history of people in former colonies being part of the British Empire was simply erased.

Wendy Webster points out that Powell used this renaming of subjects as 'immigrants' to aid his argument that people should be repatriated. Since it was clear that they were from somewhere else, not a part of Britain, it was easier to convince the public that they should simply be returned to whence they came.[32] Miles and Phizacklea also highlight the importance of the racist aspect of this conflation of terms. They argue that 'by focusing on the physical appearance of the migrants, and by linking features such as skin colour with a negative evaluation of the migrants . . . this construction and use of the "race/immigration" notion was itself racist'.[33] This linking of 'race' with immigration thus seemed to provide a simple way of eliminating racial tension by restricting immigration and repatriating immigrants as Powell suggested. Chris Cashmore agrees saying that when the government was faced with solving the problem of racialist disturbances their proposed solution was that if migrants were not here, then there would be no antagonism.[34] This is supported by Dennis Dean who argues that after 1961 it was common to hear people blame rising immigration for causing disturbances.[35] Randall Hansen too finds that in the 1950s the argument that good race relations depended on tight immigration controls had begun to take shape.[36] Subsequent legislation about immigration and race relations was shaped by this creation of the 'colour problem'.[37] The conflation of black people and immigrants and subsequent 'problematisation' of immigration was used by anti-immigrant or racist extremists to articulate their position in a less obvious way.[38] One way that immigration was problematised in the 1950s was through the continuous discussion of housing, unemployment and education problems within the black community. By failing to address the problems of housing, local and national governments 'reinforced the emerging "commonsense" correlation between housing shortage, slums and black immigration'.[39] The association of black immigration with the problems of the urban landscape and modernity fit well with the nostalgia for England's rural past as well as the nostalgia for imperial Britain.[40]

What has been significantly lacking in literature about nationality and race in Britain is an acknowledgement that white people also have a racial identity. There is a frequent assumption that when discussion is confined to the 'traditional white' population of the UK, 'race' can safely be ignored. Terminology gives us an insight into this idea of 'white' identity as the norm. In the period under investigation here 'black' people were usually referred to either as 'coloured' or 'non-white'. White was the norm and these people were 'other' or different. When these terms are used in this book it is in keeping with contemporary usage. But issues of 'race' and racial identity were experienced by all members of British society and it is therefore crucial to incorporate a discussion of race into more 'mainstream' histories of Britain. While it is usually understood that 'non-white' people have to deal with racism on a daily basis, in talking to shop assistants, receiving dirty looks on the street or enduring difficult encounters with government institutions, it is less well understood or accepted that these phenomena also shape the lives of white people. In other words, that racism also affects its white perpetrators. As Vron Ware has pointed out, 'it is important to recognise that racial domination is a system that positions or constructs everyone who falls within its orbit'.[41] It is crucial, therefore, to examine how white people are also constructed by, and help construct, ideas of 'race'. This work looks at how predominantly white social movements viewed and articulated the engagement between their sense of nationality and 'race' – the ways in which post-imperial Britain was being 're-racialised' as diverse. Not only were discussions about the whiteness of the British people excluding many 'non-white' Britons, but they were creating a shape for Britishness, a bundle of characteristics, that were potentially very uncomfortable for many white Britons. Discussion of immigration and belonging within the British nation were not only about defining blackness, and showing how it did not belong, but also defining whiteness. Britishness itself was becoming racialised in this period, so in looking at characterisations of British identity we are also looking at racial identity. The construction of black immigration as a problem was due in part to its perceived threat to the nature of the British national community. Wendy Webster argues that in this period black people were constructed 'in opposition to white but also to British'.[42] Paul Gilroy and Kathleen Paul also argue that it is not possible to separate issues of race and national identity in postwar Britain.[43]

Who exactly was racist in postwar Britain has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate. Some people have looked simply to the

legacy of empire for the source of racist beliefs, but these have been criticised as too neat or easy.[44] Within British society the upper classes and political leaders and the working classes have alternatively been seen as the most racist group.[45] The popular belief at the time was that the working class was particularly racist. All of this scholarship paints a picture of Britain in the 1960s deeply fraught with questions of race and nation. It is against this backdrop that the present study is set. The objective is to look at these issues from a different perspective. Both the literature on national identity and race in postwar Britain are well established and largely preoccupied with traditional politics. This literature has also largely been a discussion of the relationships between the government, immigrants and the working class – the middle class has largely slipped under the radar. The objective of this book is to examine these issues in a liminal space between 'politics' and the 'public', within the extra-parliamentary political sphere and within the middle class. As such it will focus on the realm outside of normal notions of political debate. While some politicians will figure in the discussion they are used as a framework within which arguments, discussion, agreements and disagreements within society are set. It is an often-repeated fallacy that the middle class left were uninterested in, or unaffected by, immigration and race issues or that they were uniformly and easily anti-racist. Members of the left too had gone to school in places where the map of the empire was pinned on the wall and were told, both implicitly and explicitly, that white Britons were somehow superior to others. It should, therefore, be unsurprising that they too had to come to terms with wide-ranging changes in their understanding of the world and Britain's place within it and the impact of this on British society and 'Britishness'.

This book seeks to re-examine the history of white, middle-class Britain within this racial context. Discussions of the racial character of Britain underpinned the construction of post-imperial Britain that radical left-wing extra-parliamentary organisations could produce. 'Race' gave shape and contour to what it meant to be British in this period. Schwarz has shown that 'at the very moment of decolonization, a language of racial whiteness assumed a new prominence *at home*'.[46] This work diverges from that of Schwarz in focusing on those who opposed Powellism and antipathy to immigration and black people but agrees that thinking about race and exploring the impact of racial thinking within post-imperial Britain is crucial in beginning to build a fuller picture of the contours of British society and culture in this period.

The 1960s in British History

The 1960s are a decade steeped in myth. They are associated with 'swinging London', psychedelia, hippies, students, colour and revolution in societal norms. This myth was created both at the time and in subsequent decades and has remarkable staying power. Perhaps this is because some of it is true. As Arthur Marwick argues, whether you think the 1960s were the best or worst of times, all agree that '*something* significant happened in the sixties'.[47] What exactly this was, and what it meant, is still largely up for debate. For many years the history of the decade has been dominated, and some would argue controlled, by nostalgia.[48] As Gerard DeGroot argues 'the decade has been transformed into a morality play, an explanation of how the world went astray or, conversely, how hope was squandered'.[49] The 1960s appear to many people on both sides of the political spectrum as a crucial and transformative time and it is certainly true that important things did take place in this decade. However, the telescoping of nostalgia has often seen the decade as one singular or linear progression. When people think and talk about the 1960s they often think about hippies, demonstrations or riots rather than mild-mannered students in suits. But it is the latter which you would find in Britain into the middle of the 1960s. We need to be much more careful about seeing the 1960s as a single uniform period – there were as many differences between people and culture in 1961 and 1969 as there were between 1956 and 1969. The dividing line is not 1960, but rather 1963/1964. Around the time of the election of Harold Wilson there was a shift in atmosphere and in the 'public mood' that can certainly be seen in the radical extra-parliamentary organisations of the time.[50]

The 1960s are also often mythologised as a decade of decadence and decline. Although this sense of decline was often tied to the end of empire, it was not always articulated in this way and many other issues were used as evidence of Britain's decline in this period.[51] This sense of decline was clearly palpable in Powell's speech, but was more widely discussed in terms of economics and social values. In the 1960s the sense of affluence – that Britons had 'never had it so good' – began to crumble, particularly with the currency devaluation of 1967.[52] Jim Tomlinson has done extensive work on the apparent economic decline of Britain in this period.[53] For those on the right of the political spectrum, particularly those looking back on the 1960s from the vantage point of the 1980s, the 'permissive' legislation of the 1960s was clear evidence of Britain's decadence and decline in moral virtue.[54] But just like the mythologising

of the 1960s as a period of opportunity, this view of the 1960s as a moment of decadence has served to justify contemporary arguments of historians and politicians, particularly the neo-conservatism of the 1980s and beyond.

Existing histories of the 1960s often do a good job of exploring changes in fashion, sexual mores, attitudes towards religion and other cultural norms. However, they have largely ignored the fact that this was also the period of rapid decolonisation. Even DeGroot's wide-ranging coverage of the decade does not mention decolonisation. The two groups of literature, that about the cultural transformations of the 1960s and that focused on race and immigration, often do not speak to each other. They give two parallel yet different, and largely incompatible, accounts of life in 1960s Britain. The two accounts primarily pivot around different sides of the political spectrum and different classes. Whereas accounts of 1960s cultures focus on the left and the middle class, those about race and immigration tend to focus on the right wing and working class. Yet the two sides were responding to the same economic, political and cultural events. They may have had completely different experiences of these events, but it is in this diversity of experience and reaction that the interesting history of the period lies.

This book is the first to explore how organisations and individuals on the left of the political spectrum, but outside of organised political circles, were thinking about and reacting to the end of the British Empire. It shows that the left equally struggled with the issues that this provoked – those of international power and prestige, changes in British society, and changing patterns of immigration and ideas of 'race'. The left, particularly radical extra-parliamentary organisations, were fundamental to shaping the contours of the debate about what Britain was, and what it should be, in a post-imperial age.

Theory and Method

This book is about 'post-imperial' Britain. This is a deliberate, though not uncontroversial, choice of words. On one hand this terminology simply denotes a period of time following the official transfer of power of the majority of Britain's colonies. However, the term also denotes a certain ethos or sensibility that it is the intention of this book to explore. As Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose have discussed, the terminology around empire, imperialism, colony and colonialism is highly contested.[55] This book follows their line which sees imperialism as the process of creating empire, while colonialism refers

specifically to events and issues within former colonies. In talking about 'post-imperial Britain', then, this book seeks to explore the situation within the metropole looking at how the end of the empire affected Britain rather than the colonies. This book does use some of the insights of postcolonial theory. It is reading material 'against the grain' to explore the ways in which empire and imperialism have infiltrated the attitudes, values and worldviews of middle-class members of select organisations.[56] It argues that even when empire is not explicitly present, it is impossible to discuss British identity or concepts of Britishness without reference to the empire. The empire was there whether people were consciously aware of it or not. In his most recent work, mentioned above, Bill Schwarz has shown the importance of the memory of empire in creating a sense of British identity, and British 'whiteness', in the aftermath of empire.[57] Schwarz argues that the memory of empire was a crucial component of 'Powellism', often used as shorthand for an anti-immigrant attitude characterised by Powell's 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech. What this volume seeks to show is that memory of empire was also crucial in constructing the worldview, attitudes and values of those – the radical left – who saw themselves as anti-colonial and 'progressive' in their political ethos. What the evidence presented throughout this book will show is that the radical left too 'encountered many inhibitions in speaking about the imperial past', some of their own making.[58] These inhibitions meant that they were often outwardly anti-imperial while relying unthinkingly on the 'realities' of British superiority to articulate the world around them and their place within it.

Methodologically this book utilises the analysis of language and rhetoric. It uses left-wing extra-parliamentary organisations as a window on a particular political, social and economic milieu.[59] The organisations chosen for this purpose are the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), the National Union of Students of England, Wales and Northern Ireland (NUS) and a number of groups that were part of the Northern Irish Civil Rights movement (NICR). Through an analysis of their literature, pamphlets, newspapers, minutes of meetings, correspondence and other such material, we will examine the ways in which members of these organisations articulated ideas of British identity, both in its external, or global, influence and its domestic character. These organisations were chosen for their particular importance within United Kingdom extra-parliamentary political action during the 'long 1960s'.[60] They have also each been an important site for the myth-making that has surrounded this important decade. The three

organisations whose headquarters were in England – although they had members and local groups throughout the UK – CND, the AAM and the NUS, loomed large in British politics and society later in the century as well. This memory has, at times, clouded the reality of the organisations in the 1960s. The NICR movement is, quite obviously, the foil of this study. It is not one organisation but many and is the only one based outside of England. It is included here to provide a point of comparison against which to measure and further understand the English groups. But it is also included to undermine and question two key assumptions. First, the idea that Northern Ireland was somehow 'different' and cannot be easily compared to issues and events in the rest of the UK. Second, that people and groups in England have a monopoly on the idea of what it means to be British. What is clearly missing from this study is an examination of the impact of the end of empire on Scotland and Wales and how the left responded to it there. Unfortunately, due to constraints of time and space these explorations will have to wait for future work.

As mentioned, these groups were chosen because of their importance within Britain during the 1960s and because of their legacies and their perceived or imagined importance, but also because they represent different areas that were affected by the loss of empire. CND particularly grappled with Britain's diminished world power status – how to be a world leader without the one thing that made them world class – the empire. AAM struggled with Britain's imperial legacy in South Africa and at the head of a multiracial Commonwealth. The NUS allows us to examine issues around the generation gap. The members of NUS were not politically aware when Britain was a 'great' imperial power but had grown up in an age of apparent 'decline'. The NICR movement represents Britain's ongoing imperialism and the divide between the rhetoric of independence and equality and the reality of discrimination. The different objectives and interests of each of these groups means that they are not uniformly discussed throughout this book. Instead particular groups speak more forcefully on certain issues and their views are represented accordingly. Despite their many differences, individual motivations and characteristics it is the contention of this book that they were each responding to the end of the British Empire and the myriad ways in which they did this shed important light on the organisations themselves, and the nature of the radical left in post-imperial Britain.

The 1960s are often most remembered for the activities and efforts of youth, but youth were not the only or even the main driving forces in

these organisations. CND, often credited as the first of a new type of social movement or non-governmental organisation (NGO) was principally organised and run by middle-aged people. They did rely on young people to attend meetings and marches, but the direction of the organisation was decided by an older generation. CND was created in 1958 by an assortment of the 'great and the good' including its first President Bertrand Russell and chairman Canon John Collins. In the late 1950s and early 1960s CND was a significant force in British public life able to amass large popular support. At its peak in 1962 approximately 150,000 people attended the final rally of their Aldermaston march in Trafalgar square.[61] From the middle of the 1960s their fortunes declined. The reasons for this are many and varied and have been the subject of heated debate both within the organisation and amongst historians.[62]

The AAM was also initially created and organised by middle-aged activists rather than young people. They came to rely very heavily on students by the end of the decade, but the executive of the organisation was dominated by the middle-aged. The AAM were organised in 1960 out of a boycott movement. Through most of the 1960s they were a very small and financially shaky organisation which aimed to use British consumers and the British government to pressure South Africa to end the apartheid system.[63] They relied on the work of local organisations, but major policy decisions were taken by the executive in London.

Of the organisations under consideration it was only the NUS that was dominated by youth. The NUS was created in 1922 to represent British students on the international stage.[64] It was a small and elite organisation through the end of the Second World War, as were the institutions attended by its membership. In the postwar period as the number of students in higher and further education swelled so too did the NUS. Its membership continued to expand rapidly through the 1960s. Until 1969 the constitution of the NUS prevented it from talking about matters that did not directly affect students *because* they were students. This aspect of the constitution, often referred to as 'Clause 3', created a great deal of strife and division both within the NUS and among students more generally. While the NUS was, by far, the largest student organisation in the country and provides a unique insight into discussions taking place among students at this time, it does not represent the views of all students, nor does it necessarily reflect attitudes of the 'student movement' that others have discussed.[65] Yet, the NUS was a very large organisation, representing the views of tens of thousands of students from across the United Kingdom. The NUS was criticised by some members for being 'reactionary'. It is true that throughout most of the 1960s

it was a fairly staid organisation representing, as it did, the bulk of British students who were focused on their studies. While the majority of the NUS membership clearly did not want to destroy the capitalist system, as the image of 1960s students often suggests, they were concerned about equal and fair access to grants, cared about students and others around the world and were opposed to discrimination and unfair treatment.

The NICR movement is the most amorphous movement studied here as it was made up of a number of quite different groups. Each of these groups had their own political and generational character and some, particularly People's Democracy (PD), which was based at Queen's University, Belfast, and created in 1968, certainly were dominated by the young. But other groups, namely the Campaign for Social Justice (CSJ), established by husband and wife Conn and Patricia McCluskey in Dungannon in 1963, were largely middle aged. The main organisation, the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association (NICRA), was an umbrella group created in 1967 to unite the many disparate organisations in existence and reflected the diversity of these other groups. In the main the NICR movement, like all of the other groups, was divided and fluid, carrying within it a variety of people from a number of backgrounds who often held different ideas.[66]

Drawing on the organisations' archival materials this book speaks to the ideas and attitudes of the organisations themselves; the official or agreed position. This, however, runs the risk of making these groups seem much more unified than they actually were. Whenever possible differing views and the ideas and attitudes of particular individuals have been articulated. Issues of particular debate within the organisations are also highlighted. However, even when these internal differences of opinion are not visible the assumption should be maintained that each decision was contested and was the subject of debate and discussion.

Constructing Post-Imperial Britain is divided into three parts. Part I explores how these organisations conceptualised Britain's changing international position. By exploring how these groups conceived of Britain maintaining international 'greatness', their ideas about the role of the Commonwealth and Britain's relationships with the superpowers, the UN and NATO, this part argues that these groups did not initially see that the end of empire meant a diminishing in Britain's world role. Instead they cast around for other ways for Britain to maintain its international primacy. Part II examines the impact of the end of empire on attitudes towards the domestic sphere. In looking at how these groups positioned themselves within British society, how they saw the British public and the critiques they made of British society, this part argues that

the end of empire affected all aspects of British society, changing conceptions of what British society was and what it could be. Finally, Part III explores the most visible impact of the end of empire, the changing migration patterns between the 'New Commonwealth' and 'the motherland', exploring the attitudes and ideas of these organisations towards 'race', racial discrimination and the creation of a multiracial Britain. This final part argues that, regardless of the reputation of these organisations or their commitment to equality, they too struggled to come to terms with Britain as a multiracial society. Throughout, this book argues that the end of empire had far more important and far-reaching impacts than has usually been acknowledged. While not always discussed explicitly, the end of the British Empire necessitated fundamental changes in attitude and worldview among all Britons, altering the way that Britain and 'Britishness' were conceived and allowing for the construction of a post-imperial British identity.

Part I

Britain's Changing International Position

1
British 'Greatness' after Empire

As Prime Minister Harold MacMillan said, the 'winds of change' were sweeping through the British Empire in 1960.[1] India, Pakistan and Ghana were already independent states and, within a few short years, all of Britain's African colonies followed. While MacMillan's pronouncement referred specifically to political changes in Britain's African colonies, no one, including MacMillan, could yet foresee what sort of impact these changes would have on politics, society and culture within the United Kingdom. It was apparent that politicians, senior civil servants and the upper classes put great stock in the empire, but the extent to which the majority of Britons knew or cared about the empire has been widely disputed.[2] The extreme right were certainly concerned about the loss of empire as were the more moderate right wing of the Conservative Party. Churchill himself was a strong advocate of empire and particularly bemoaned the loss of India.[3] The picture on the left was slightly more complicated. Labour Party policy was that Britain should give up its empire. Opposition to empire was one of the few truly unifying aspects of the postwar British left.[4] There was general agreement that colonies and colonial peoples should be in control of their own destinies, but what exactly this meant for Britain – what this did to Britain's international position, its place in the world – was a point of dispute. And, of course, this was complicated by the emergence of two new superpowers. Whether they liked it or not, Britain was no longer at the head of the international table. For the government, this was made abundantly clear in 1956 with the Suez Crisis. Eden's failed attempt to retake the Suez canal and demonstrate British ongoing military and political superiority forced a reconsideration within government circles about Britain's place in the world.[5] However, it took much longer, at least a decade, for this reconsideration to trickle down to the British public and into British society.

Examining the ways in which the end of empire impacted on notions of British identity and society among the left is a study in contradiction. An assumption that Britain continued to be a 'great' power was accompanied by the belief that empire was an outdated notion. The tension between these two ideas, when it was recognised, was addressed by the argument that Britain's greatness was, or should be, founded on a new basis, that of morality rather than military might and control of other territories. Arguments about Britain's identity as a tolerant and moral nation, used in debates about slavery in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and revived in the twentieth century during both world wars, were once again deployed to differentiate Britain from the new nuclear 'superpowers'. Throughout the period under investigation here the Cold War defined international politics and squeezed the space for independent powers who were forced to choose allegiance to one superpower-dominated block or the other. Like many other countries Britain was looking for a way to carve themselves some space, power and influence in this situation which allowed them to be both strong allies with the United States and preserve some international autonomy. An awareness of this problem stretched across the political spectrum and from government down to activists at the grassroots level. How exactly Britain should address this problem was the source of long-standing and heated debate both within the halls of power and on the streets.

The first part of *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain* addresses this question. It explores the many ways in which the radical left attempted to shore-up or redefine Britain's international position. We will examine the importance of Britain's relationships to the superpowers, particularly the United States, and international organisations in Chapter 2 and the lasting impact of the empire and commonwealth for Britain's international position in Chapter 3. But first, this chapter explores how CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement conceptualised Britain's changing international position. The discussion of British 'greatness' within CND dominates the beginning parts of this chapter while the attitudes of the AAM, NUS and NICR movement enter into the discussion in the second half of the chapter. None of these groups were under any illusion that Britain's international position remained the same in the late 1950s as it had been in the 1880s or even the 1930s. In fact, they were glad that Britain was no longer the world's policeman. The radical left is often assumed to be internationalist rather than nationalist or patriotic in orientation. However, each of these organisations were clearly national in focus as James Hinton and Holger Nehring

have shown in relation to peace protestors.[6] On the radical left, arguments for Britain's ongoing 'greatness' were made most clearly within the anti-nuclear movement. CND saw the end of empire and the creation of a modern, post-imperial, Britain as an opportunity for Britain to reclaim its position as moral compass of the world. Britain's international importance was also assumed by the AAM, the NUS and groups within the NICR movement. Although this assumption is sometimes difficult to detect it was just as important as the overt claims of the anti-nuclear movement. Over the course of the 1960s this expectation or assumption of British 'greatness' was increasingly questioned by those on the left. The end of empire allowed for a re-imagining of the kind of world power Britain was and should be. But the recognition of the end of empire and creation of Britain as a post-imperial power did not take place at one particular moment. It was a process and it was not a smooth or easy one.

Postwar British history has often been described as a story of decline in which the loss of empire is a key indicator of this decline.[7] But this popular story of perpetual, or inevitable, decline is too simplistic. It does not take into account that there were discussions and disagreements within all areas of British society about how to interpret and negotiate Britain's changing international position. This chapter shows that in the 1960s it was not a foregone conclusion that Britain's international position was diminishing. Ideas about what kind of international power post-imperial Britain should be were nuanced, contested and non-linear in their development during this decade. This chapter will conclude by examining how these groups came to depend on their own international importance. While the expectation of British central international importance remained, by the end of the decade the location of this power had shifted from the government to Britons themselves.

CND and the Desire to Increase Britain's Moral 'Greatness'

'Britain Must Give the Lead', proclaimed the first anti-nuclear march to the Atomic Weapons Research establishment at Aldermaston on the Easter weekend 1958.[8] Initially organised by the Direct Action Committee against Nuclear Weapons (DAC), this march was supported by CND and quickly became the single most important activity within CND's yearly calendar. But exactly *why* Britain should lead, *what* they should lead and why they were not already leading was left unspoken. It was clear to CND and its supporters that Britain was going in the wrong

direction with nuclear weapons. CND argued that Britain should be the world leader in disarmament and moral authority, not one of the nuclear powers. Britain tested its first atomic weapon in 1952 and in 1957 tested its first hydrogen bomb.[9] CND was created, in early 1958, in part to show the British government a new way to maintain their leadership of the world 'if no longer as a military power, then by setting a moral example'.[10] Formed by a collection of the 'great and the good', including J.B. Priestly, Bertrand Russell, Kingsley Martin, Julian Huxley, Michael Foot and Canon John Collins, CND was an umbrella organisation which set out to unify the myriad small groups that existed to oppose the bomb and nuclear testing.[11] CND was, therefore, a broad church unified around the simple slogan 'ban the bomb' but, increasingly over the course of the decade, divided about how to get there.[12] It is hard to accurately gauge CND support. They did not have official membership until the mid-1960s. However, their perceived impact on activism in Britain in the 1960s, and the left more generally, still looms large. Throughout the extensive literature on CND it is argued that they were a way of expressing 'reluctance to come to terms with the sudden loss of British international power and prestige'.[13] The nuclear bomb itself was understood by CND as evil and the fundamental problem, while the solution was seen to be action from the British government.[14]

CND acknowledged that in the aftermath of the Second World War Britain was no longer a key military power. The toll that the war had taken on Britain, and the emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as military, and particularly nuclear, superpowers arguably put Britain in the role of a second-rate power. Both postwar British governments and CND had plans to reverse this trend. Unfortunately, they were diametrically opposed. Whereas governments planned to keep Britain at the international top table by developing a British bomb, CND argued that it was by eschewing the nuclear game that Britain could reclaim its nineteenth-century 'greatness'. The moral 'greatness' that Britain had shown in ending the slave trade and slavery, CND argued, they could regain by spearheading a non-nuclear solution to international problems. Reports about CND's first meeting within *Peace News* highlighted the speech by former Liberal and Labour MP Richard Acland. The article suggested that Acland's speech was particularly popular because he

> stressed the movement's particular appeal to young people who had felt apathetic and frustrated by the absence of clear-cut issues such as the slave trade, the fight for trade unionism, old-age pensions,

> women's suffrage, and other causes which had inspired young people in the past.[15]

CND aimed to give the abolition of nuclear weapons the moral fortitude that had been enjoyed by the campaign to abolish the slave trade. Many CND banners, as Meredith Veldman points out, 'pointed to Britain's leadership in ridding the world of the slave trade' which, she says, was part of the 'British tradition of benevolent reform'.[16] Even Bertrand Russell, in 1961, pointed to this aspect of Britain's past as a moral leader. He believed that

> when we say, 'Britons never, never, never shall be slaves', our hearts swell with pride and we feel, though we do not explicitly say, that we should be slaves if we were not free at any moment to commit any crime against any other country.[17]

Russell was linking nuclear weapons to slavery and attacking the government position that only by having nuclear weapons, and, therefore, being able to commit mass murder, would they be able to retain British 'greatness'. Instead, Russell and the other CND supporters, attempted to reclaim the pride they felt in being part of this progressive, moral state by urging Britain to unilaterally disarm and show the world a new moral path.[18]

CND was clear in their assessment that Britain's role as a military leader was spent. They were particularly vocal about this in the immediate aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.[19] The CND leadership argued that the crisis had shown the emptiness of the government's claim that having nuclear weapons gave Britain international clout. The fact that the world had come to the brink of nuclear disaster and Britain had not figured in the discussions or negotiations seemed to CND to prove this. In January 1963, the CND newspaper *Sanity* published an article which explicitly stated that

> Britain's role as an independent nuclear power is played out. Will the British people now recognise this, and demand a change of role? Britain had tried to be a great Power in the military sense and has failed miserably. But CND says that there are other kinds of greatness. We have been pointing them out for a long time. Can we now start exploring them?[20]

The path that Britain should be on, according to CND and other anti-nuclear campaigners, was that towards unilateral disarmament. CND argued that Britain needed to give up the bomb both because the bomb was inherently amoral, but also because British unilateral disarmament would show other states that it was possible to abandon the nuclear arms race. CND was accused of being 'utopian' or symbolic in this demand. To CND supporters, however, it was much more than this. As Laurie Pavitt, MP for Willesden West, said in 1962, 'the Campaign must continue to press the point that Britain's unilateral disarmament was not "merely a gesture", but was a practical first step towards a world without arms'.[21] The CND leadership firmly believed in the early 1960s that Britain's international prestige was so high that if it abandoned nuclear weapons, other states including the superpowers would follow.[22] Britain merely had to 'lead' the world along the correct, moral, anti-nuclear path.

The phrase 'Let Britain Lead' was the basis of CND actions from its foundation through to the mid-1960s. After the original London to Aldermaston March which bore this slogan, CND held a week-long national awareness event in September 1959 under the same heading.[23] Four years later, in 1963, this phrase was again resurrected as the title of a CND meeting organised to introduce a new policy initiative.[24] Although this policy was a step back from unilateralism, it still required a British initiative to change the world and still, rhetorically at least, saw an important role for Britain as an international moral leader.

This role as a moral leader was intrinsic to the post-imperial British identity that CND supporters were helping to create.[25] CND supporters were ashamed of the path that Britain was on, participating in the nuclear game by possessing British weapons. This seemed to be the continuation of the old, amoral British Empire. If Britain gave up its nuclear weapons, CND argued, it would re-instil pride in the British people, showing a new, modern and post-imperial Britain. Ritchie Calder, Scottish peace activist and future president of CND, wrote a public memo to the incoming prime minister in 1964, which pleaded,

> Do me a personal favour, Prime Minister, give me back my pride in my own country. Let me push out my chest, and say: 'I am British' . . . [through] genuine disarmament – not waiting for the Other Fellow, but showing the way by courageous example.[26]

Calder was demanding British unilateral action based on his experience at the UN during the Cuban Missile Crisis. He argued that this crisis had

shown that Britain 'just didn't matter', even with the bomb. Perhaps more fundamentally, Calder was making a plea for a particularly *British* national pride. His Scottish identity was irrelevant for him in advocating a new post-imperial British identity whose roots were embedded in the legacy of British morality. That is not to say that Calder did not see himself as Scottish or primarily Scottish, but apart from his personal identity he was advocating a particular idea about what Britain should be doing based on his view of British ideals, values and morality.

Appeals to British national pride were not uncommon in political circles in the middle of the 1960s. Harold Wilson was elected in 1964 on the platform of creating a 'New Britain' that would be progressive and forward-moving and would rebuild Britain into a state that all could be proud of.[27] CND adopted this sort of language to put forward their own arguments. Olive Gibbs, the new chairman of CND from 1964, used this argument in her annual address to Labour in 1965. She thought that

> If this Government would set an example to the rest of the world by being the first to cut arms expenditure in favour of relieving world poverty, Britain as a nation and democratic socialism as an ideal would earn a respect and a prestige that the possession of nuclear weapons can never earn for us.[28]

It was the search for this lost 'prestige' that was pivotal to CND. Schwarz has argued that this nostalgic search for a previous moment of perfection was a quintessential aspect of British culture at the end of empire.[29] Although Schwarz discusses a search among those on the right for a lost white Britain, this same yearning, although for a different past, is visible here among the left. Without this prestige CND feared that Britain would sink to the second-rate power many people both within and outside Britain thought it already was. Without this prestige CND was concerned that Britain would be unable to affect the real change that was needed around the world.

It was vital for CND's own success that Britain embraced the role of moral leadership they suggested. At CND's 1964 Annual Conference it was agreed to amend their policy to include three new statements which once again affirmed the idea that small changes made by Britain would have an enormous international impact. They argued for 'immediate cuts in British conventional forces, as a way of easing world tensions' and argued that this would be supported if people understood 'the tremendous possibilities for improved standards of living throughout the world if and when they are achieved'.[30] Members and supporters

of CND believed that Britain's moral authority and courage to protest were needed around the world.[31] Later in 1965 it was argued on the front page of CND's newspaper *Sanity* that British action against proliferation would be uniquely effective. The CND leadership thought it was 'Britain's good fortune that at this moment, she, more than any other country' could impact the actions of America, the Soviet Union and India.[32]

Throughout the 1960s CND was clear that ownership of the bomb was preventing Britain from having the international power and position that they should. The annual conference in 1965 passed a motion which was prefaced by the statement, 'Conference agrees that world nuclear and conventional disarmament is a necessity. Conference reaffirms that a non-nuclear Britain outside nuclear alliances is best placed to achieve this.'[33] The motion went on to prescribe a wide-ranging international policy for Britain including disassociation from American activities in Vietnam and Dominica, the establishment of nuclear-free zones in Latin America and Africa, withdrawal of the British military presence 'East of Suez' and support for China's entry into the UN. This motion also called on Britain to provide the initiative for two wide-ranging policies. The first was to replace the current nuclear alliances with a European security system under the auspices of the UN. The second was to initiate disarmament talks in which China would participate. Britain's ability to carry out this ambitious programme hinged entirely on its moral authority, which, CND argued, would come from their decision to 'immediately cease to purchase, make or use nuclear weapons'.[34] It was only by taking up the 'courageous' non-nuclear position advocated by CND that Britain would regain its international position. This argument was frequently reiterated in the pages of *Sanity* and became more urgent in the late 1960s. In 1967 the General Secretary of CND, Dick Nettleton, argued that Britain's current nuclear policy put them in an impossible situation. As Nettleton said,

> a nation that is merely joining the scramble for an independent deterrent, tinkering with the production of four Polaris submarines, dithering with whether or not to equip them with a new generation of nuclear weaponry (Poseidon), and putting itself further into pawn to buy nuclear strike aircraft, is in such a ridiculous posture that it cannot hope to command respect.[35]

The abandonment of nuclear weapons was, therefore, crucial, not just because it would give Britain a bigger role in the Middle East and

Vietnam, as argued by Nettleton, but, more importantly, because it would allow them to regain respect. And it was this international respect, the belief that Britain was powerful and important, on which CND depended.

From the late 1950s into the early 1960s the basic assumption of CND was that Britain was a crucial world player that had lost its way. CND argued that Britain should rekindle the glory that they had enjoyed in the nineteenth century when their moral force, they believed, had ended slavery and put the world on a more progressive path. The postwar nuclear situation offered Britain a chance to once again be at the forefront on progressive policies, where they belonged. The aims of CND and successive British governments were not that different; both were looking for ways to reassert and increase British greatness at a time when the country was being sidelined by new superpowers. More than a decade after the Suez Crisis showed Britain and the world that Britain could no longer do whatever it wanted on the international stage, the radical left in Britain demanded just that – that Britain ignore the realities of the Cold War balance of power and unilaterally abandon nuclear weapons and nuclear alliances.

Assumptions of British 'Greatness'

While other groups across the radical left, like the AAM, NUS and the NICR movement, were not as vocal as CND in arguing for the renewal of British 'greatness', they did depend on Britain maintaining its international prestige and importance. They did not attempt to define 'new' ways for Britain to be great, instead they simply counted on the international clout that Britain had 'always' had. Britain's central international position underpinned the work of the AAM. Set up in 1960, the AAM argued that the apartheid system in South Africa could only be maintained with British support and that Britain could, if it chose, single-handedly end it. In the wake of the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960, when the South African government killed 69 protesters, the AAM demanded that Britain not supply South Africa 'with arms or patents for arms, since these will be used for the killing of Africans'.[36] Although they knew that Britain was not the only country to supply South Africa with weapons, the AAM thought that the symbolic importance of Britain's international position, and its legacy as a former colonial power, made it crucially important that they not supply weapons to maintain apartheid. The AAM's focus on the actions of the British government was maintained even after the apartheid regime

became a particular concern of the UN. While promoting UN actions, to which we will return in the next chapter, the AAM continued to call for 'British support of the U.N. stand on apartheid'.[37] It was not enough that the UN take a stand on apartheid, and without British support the AAM thought that any UN resolution would be meaningless. In the early 1960s the AAM, like CND, were concerned that any ongoing British arms deals with South Africa demonstrated that Britain was heading down the wrong moral path.

Throughout the 1960s the AAM's action plans were built on the assumption of a central international role for Britain. When Fenner Brockway outlined the four key points of the campaign for 1965, three of them depended fundamentally on British action and assumed a strong British reputation and influence. These targets included extending the British arms embargo to include spare parts for military equipment, backing UN economic sanctions and maintaining the cultural and sport boycott.[38] None of these demands in themselves were new for the campaign and they all contained an international element. However, the wording that Brockway used shows clearly the assumption that each of these targets depended on British 'greatness'. The target was not just to extend the arms embargo but to 'complete the British arms embargo'. The AAM were not just campaigning for UN economic sanctions but to 'organise public pressure on this Government to view sympathetically a U.N. organised campaign of economic sanctions against South Africa; and to persuade it to express such sympathy before the Security Council'. The AAM did not just want to continue the boycott but to ensure that 'no British artist goes to South Africa to perform before segregated audiences, that no British sports team takes part in any match with an apartheid South African side, that no local council, co-operative or other institution buys or sells South African goods'.[39] Fundamentally, according to Brockway, the international success of the AAM itself and the downfall of the system of apartheid depended on British action. The AAM could convince all other countries in Europe, or the UN, to isolate apartheid South Africa, but without Britain they could never really succeed in ending the racist regime. For the AAM British action was both the first step and the main goal.

NICR movement activists, too, depended on Britain's ongoing international importance and reputation as a progressive and liberal bastion. It was this reputation, and successive British governments' fears about tarnishing it, that they hoped and expected would encourage action against inequality in Northern Ireland. The leaders of one of the earliest civil rights organisations, the Campaign for Social Justice (CSJ) founded

by Conn and Patricia McCluskey in Dungannon in 1963, were particularly keen to play on British government concerns about the country's international reputation. The CSJ sent its newsletters to supporters throughout England and the United States and argued that it was the opinions of these people, and the damage that they could do to Britain's international reputation, that would force the British government to act. Conn McCluskey argued in 1970 that it would be 'their [Americans'] disillusionment with Britain's slum [Northern Ireland, that] will militate against Britain'. Conn felt 'gratified . . . as day follows day of bad publicity' about Britain in the United States.[40] A year later Conn was still convinced that the civil rights movement was making progress because, as he wrote to a friend, 'Britain is surely taking big knocks all over the world to her prestige'.[41] He articulated a prevailing mood within the NICR movement that Britain could not hold out for long with such international pressure on its reputation as a liberal, tolerant, fair and progressive nation. The actions of the Northern Irish state itself, civil rights leaders thought, would be enough to dispel the notion that the United Kingdom was progressive and fair without civil rights activists having to do anything other than disseminate the truth. When in 1971, on the reintroduction of internment, the government arrested members of People's Democracy (PD), a civil rights organisation based at Queen's University Belfast, including one of their leaders, Michael Farrell, Patricia McCluskey argued that in simply telling the media about their treatment 'the harm that these articulate and educated young people, and others like them, will do to the British prestige when they are eventually freed, cannot be calculated'.[42] The McCluskeys saw British prestige as their main target. It was this which was vulnerable to attack, but also which the McCluskeys believed was most valuable to the British state and British people. The McCluskeys believed that if the British people felt that the situation in Northern Ireland was causing them to lose face on the international stage, they would force the government to change the unequal situation in the province.

All of these organisations – CND, the AAM and members of the NICR movement – assumed that Britain had an important international position that should be upheld and protected. They each counted on it to be able to do their work. They knew that the end of the empire made Britain's international position vulnerable and that it was shifting and changing, but this, they argued, was not necessarily a bad thing. For the AAM, this change meant that they could encourage the British government to adjust their relationship with South Africa, to take a strong stand against the apartheid regime and that, when they succeeded in

doing so, this would have a serious impact on the system of apartheid itself. For civil rights activists in Northern Ireland, Britain's prestige and reputation as an important and morally progressive state were essential in their quest to convince the government at Westminster to take action to eliminate inequality in Northern Ireland.

Questioning British 'Greatness'

As mentioned above, when Harold Wilson came to power in October 1964 it was heralded by many, not least Wilson himself, as the dawning of a great new age for Britain. The promise of 'modernity', technological innovation and progress that had been fundamental to Wilson's election victory were soon stymied by a small governmental majority and increasingly difficult financial times.[43] Although the 1960s are remembered, and mythologised, as a period of affluence, permissiveness and confidence in Britain, they were for many a period of deep and growing cynicism. This was particularly true for those on the left and especially after 1964. The impact of the Suez Crisis and the implications of the end of empire and Britain's changing international status were beginning to permeate society and were compounded by disillusionment with Wilson and his government. From the middle of the 1960s, there were increasing doubts both about the will of the British government and their ability to retain or regain Britain's strong, moral international position.

For many people on the political left, it was the Cuban Missile Crisis rather than the Suez Crisis which was the first real indication of Britain's second-tier status. In January 1963 CND's newspaper *Sanity* published an article about the crisis which argued that the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis was when 'Britain's pretensions to a place among the Top Nuclear Nations collapsed'.[44] Later that year, Alan Shuttleworth, CND supporter and editor of *New Left Review*, argued that the crisis had significantly changed Britain's international position. He thought it had shown that 'nothing we [Britain] can do is going to produce an apocalyptic change in the attitude of Russia and America'.[45] Although he did not think that meant they should give up trying. Shuttleworth believed that Britain should still unilaterally disarm, but it was no longer so clear that this would mean an end to the nuclear game and the Cold War as it was widely assumed within CND a few years earlier. By the end of the 1960s the importance of British disarmament seemed even further reduced. When asked by a sailor from a Polaris-equipped submarine in 1969, 'If we disarm alone, how much impetus would it give to worldwide

disarmament?', the new Chairman of CND, Malcolm Caldwell, could not answer very positively. He no longer saw British action as the sole and necessary step towards worldwide nuclear disarmament. Instead, he said, 'Clearly, the British decision unilaterally to give up nuclear weapons would be a *step* in the direction back from the brink. It could only strengthen the decision of those powers that have deliberately refrained from acquiring nuclear capacity.'[46] British disarmament was no longer something that would single-handedly convince the superpowers to disarm. Instead it was simply one small step in the right direction.

Within six months of Wilson's election the hope within the left that he would take the country down a new, more moral path was beginning to dissipate. For CND this was in large part because he continued to support many of the foreign policy initiatives of the Conservative Government, including keeping Britain's nuclear arsenal. He also maintained Britain's military interests, 'East of Suez'. After 1964, as well as nuclear weapons, CND concentrated on this aspect of Britain's foreign policy. In 1965 *Sanity* published an article which argued that 'the metaphysical concept of our military role "East of Suez" is as out-of-date as the Suez adventure was in 1956'.[47] They continued to argue that it was not military might, but moral force that would give Britain real international power. As John Gittings, CND supporter and research assistant at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, argued, Britain's international clout depended 'upon the way we behave, not upon our free-falling bombs'.[48] When Wilson finally declared that Britain would withdraw from 'East of Suez' in 1968, CND saw this as a triumph but also feared the potential impact that this could have on people, arguing that

> to withdraw our military presence in no way means that we should abandon our real East of Suez responsibilities. Perhaps we might soon, for the first time, take them up. That is, we might help people to get a decent living without interference.[49]

CND was clearly articulating Britain's moral rather than military role around the world. CND's National Council also specifically applauded this change in the government posture 'East of Suez', calling it a 'welcome step'.[50] But CND was also concerned because these changes had not been the result of a confident and principled decision by Wilson's government. Instead, it had been one of the concessions of a cash-strapped government that had to devalue the pound in 1967.[51] The

decision to withdraw from 'East of Suez' and decrease British arms spending were economic and were coming too late. According to CND the Wilson government's concern to keep the British nuclear arsenal had been one of the root causes of the economic problems they faced in the middle of the 1960s. It was this which had caused the 'wreckage of our [Britain's] international status and the misery of our unemployed'.[52] For CND, Britain's retention of nuclear weapons was simply too costly, both in terms of prestige and the government purse.

By the end of the 1960s the disappointment and contempt toward the government's inaction was palpable within the pages of *Sanity*. While the CND leadership had always been critical of government actions with regard to nuclear weapons, now they were becoming critical and cynical about British actions around the globe. In 1967, Terence Heelas, a frequent contributor to the pages of *Sanity*, argued that in the Middle East, despite their rhetoric, the British had 'proved as useful as a pile of wet fish'.[53] It was now even suggested that Britain would need to be pulled, kicking and screaming, towards nuclear disarmament behind the superpowers rather than leading them along this moral non-nuclear path. In 1971 an article in *Sanity* reasoned that

> China has declared that she will never be the first to use nuclear weapons, and she calls on the Soviet Union and the United States to make the same pledge. It is virtually certain that if these three powers agreed, Britain would follow suit and France would eventually have to join the pact.[54]

CND hoped that Britain would follow other powers – led by China – towards nuclear disarmament. The argument for Britain to be the world's leader, to show other powers how to be courageous and stand up for what they believed in, was no longer the only one being voiced by CND.

This critique of the government's actions and cynicism was not confined to CND. The AAM too was increasingly sceptical at the end of the 1960s about the real impact that Britain could have on the international stage. It was no longer blindly accepted within the AAM that British action against apartheid would turn the tide in South Africa. The AAM Annual Report in 1966–67 found that the actions of the British government were only 'one event in the unfolding of the struggle'.[55] While it was still important to get the British government to act against apartheid, it was no longer seen as the most crucial part of the AAM's struggle.

Despite the clear and persistent criticism of Harold Wilson and his government through the late 1960s, the election of Edward Heath in 1970 was met with increased concern and derision by these groups. The change in government gave CND the opportunity to put forward a new seven-point programme which included all of the usual demands as well as 'a really dynamic policy for initiative in international disarmament', commitment not to join the European common market and 'greater support for the underdeveloped countries'.[56] These demands not only demonstrate CNDs widening interests, but also their concern that any progress that had been made under Wilson, however scanty, would be reversed under the new government. Whereas Wilson had begun his premiership amid high hopes, Heath started his premiership within a distinctively pessimistic and cynical atmosphere. Over the next few years CND's expectations of the Heath government were not exceeded. The CND leadership urged Heath to support the SALT I treaty in 1971, fearing that 'Britain's mini-force' would interfere with the negotiations, which would be a disaster as 'hope for the future of mankind lies in getting the Americans and the Russians to abandon the nuclear arms race'.[57] While they clearly still saw Britain as having an important role to play in lessening international nuclear conflict, by the early 1970s they were simply asking that Britain not get in the way of the superpowers disarming rather than providing leadership in this direction. By the late 1960s and early 1970s the sense of optimism and hope that had pervaded CND and the AAM was largely gone. While the Suez Crisis did not critically undermine their assessment of Britain's international position, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the inability of the Wilson government to forge a new path in international relations did have this effect.

Finding Their Own 'Greatness'

These growing concerns about Britain's international power were rooted in criticisms about British governments, whatever their party affiliation. However, they did not imply a questioning of the importance of Britain's international reputation or prestige. Instead they indicate a movement away from finding Britain's power, prestige and importance in government and towards finding it in individual British organisations and people. The economic changes that produced affluence, it has been argued, created a shift away from collective identities. People retreated to their single-family dwellings and increasingly cared only about their own and their immediate family's welfare.[58] While the Labour Party struggled to come to terms with the impact of some of these changes

on the Party's electoral fortunes, the extra-parliamentary radical left embraced what this could mean for their own international power.[59] CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement increasingly came to see their own importance on the international stage and rely on their own power and prestige as British organisations.

CND saw themselves as having an important international position being the first national anti-nuclear organisation and the blueprint for similar groups around the world. The CND leadership saw it as one of the organisation's responsibilities and priorities in 1963 to 'strengthen the Campaign in other countries'.[60] The following year Olive Gibbs reminded supporters of CND's 'influence on countries other than Britain'. She was adamant that the actions and activities of CND had encouraged anti-nuclear actions around the world.[61] By 1965, CND was confident enough to pass a resolution at their annual conference calling on the executive of CND to 'take practical steps to make CND a truly world wide movement, and that, as a first step, British CND should attempt to encourage the establishment of active and effective CND movements in all countries'.[62] While CND continued to see themselves in a leadership position when it came to the international anti-nuclear movement, after the middle of the 1960s their ability to prioritise international growth was circumscribed by a decline in support within Britain. In the early 1960s CND had participated in attempts to set up international organisations against nuclear weapons. In the summer of 1959, husband and wife members of the Hampstead group toured a number of European countries with an exhibition entitled 'No Place to Hide'. The tour was considered a great success. 'As a result', according to the national executive, 'some of the European organisations are now making their own exhibitions'.[63] That year a European Federation against Nuclear Arms was created and its first meeting held in London.[64] However, although Collins and General Secretary Peggy Duff became officers of the organisation, CND did not, as a group, participate in the organisation. The difficulties that CND encountered in working with other organisations are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

From the middle of the 1960s CND found it increasingly difficult to attract large numbers to the annual Easter march and was concerned about the growth and sustainability of local groups. Support for CND continued to dwindle through the 1970s. Despite their shrinking numbers the CND leadership continued to point to the organisation's symbolic international influence during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1970 the chairman of CND, Malcolm Caldwell, reminded *Sanity* readers that the CND symbol had 'become associated throughout the world

in recent years with the people's struggle against the warlords' and that CND was proud of this association, the power of their reputation and the global range of their symbolism.[65] By the early 1970s, CND increasingly voiced its demands independently rather than demanding action from the British government.[66] This is the result of both its disillusionment with successive British governments, but also the increasing recognition on the part of CND that it could act independently on the international stage. It increasingly saw its own demands as internationally important. CND's international clout rested on the same foundation as what it had advocated for Britain – moral authority and the legacy of British opposition to inequality around the world.

The AAM also saw themselves as leaders in the international fight against apartheid. Even though they were many thousands of miles away from South Africa, they considered themselves on the frontline of opposition to apartheid. In 1964 this was confirmed for the executive committee when Ruth First, an exiled South African activist and executive committee member, reported to them about the time she had spent in solitary confinement in South Africa. She said that one of the good things about the experience was knowing that she 'had friends in AAM and possibly thousands of friends throughout the world'. She reminded them that 'to people in S.A. [who were imprisoned for their opposition to apartheid] the AAM is that shout in the night, that shadow under the door'.[67] According to First, it was this British organisation which brought hope to people suffering repression in South Africa.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s the AAM was also confident enough in their own international position to approach other organisations directly rather than petitioning the British government to act on their behalf. In 1970 they wrote to all Commonwealth universities urging them to sign up to the academic boycott of South Africa. The AAM Executive believed that their international reputation should be enough to secure the support of universities on this matter.[68] The AAM was also making a concerted effort to raise their independent international profile. They set up anti-apartheid groups in other countries, distributed their literature internationally and 'establish[ed] closer relations with the Afro-Asian members at the UN'.[69] The AAM saw it as their right and their responsibility as a British organisation to lead the world in opposition to apartheid.

Until 1969 Clause 3 of the NUS constitution allowed the organisation to discuss matters only if they impacted on students *because* they were students, which prevented the NUS from taking an overt position on Britain's international role. However, the NUS clearly saw

themselves as important leaders within the international student movement. The NUS was created in 1922 to represent British students in the international arena. With the postwar growth in higher and further education, the size and the importance of the NUS also grew. We will discuss this trend in more detail in Chapter 4. By the early 1960s, the bi-annual conferences of the NUS were one of the main places where students from across the country could meet and discuss the issues of the day. While the importance of students to the changes taking place in the 1960s has come under some criticism, the NUS itself, an organisation with several hundred thousand members throughout the decade which spawned many key political players, has largely been ignored.[70]

The NUS participated in a number of international student organisations and within each they argued that they had a particularly important position. Within the World University Service (WUS) the 'voice of the NUS' was credited as particularly important because the NUS 'was forceful and respected all over the world'.[71] A representative of the WUS came to each NUS Council to report on their activities. But they also continually had to beg for money and support from NUS and often complained that while the NUS supported them rhetorically, this was not seen in the funds donated by constituent groups.[72] While the national leadership of the NUS took a strong international stand and saw themselves as vital to the international student movement, it was often difficult for them to convince local student unions to part with cash for this ideal. This could simply reflect the tight financial constraints of these unions, but does not seem to reflect a desire for the NUS not to be involved in international groups. Instead it shows a somewhat arrogant assumption that, regardless of firm action, financial or otherwise, the NUS would always have a crucial international role because it was a British organisation. It reflects the same assumption of continued British international power and prestige discussed above within the AAM and NICR movement.

The NUS had a much more fraught relationship with two other international student organisations, the International Union of Students (IUS) and the International Student Conference (ISC). The NUS relationship with these two bodies gives us some insight into the Cold War dynamics of the period. The IUS was formed immediately after the Second World War to promote international cooperation and understanding between students across Europe and around the world. The NUS joined the organisation in 1948 and attended their yearly meeting until the mid-1950s. However, from 1949 the NUS was concerned that

it was no longer a non-partisan student organisation but had become a mouthpiece for the Soviet Union. The ISC, on the other hand, was set up in the early 1950s to provide an alternative, western-based, international student organisation. The NUS was involved in setting up this organisation and participated in the majority of its conferences, but were constrained from taking on full membership by their own constitution. In 1964, the ISC changed their available membership status, which created a crisis within the NUS about their international position and role within both groups. There was a clear division within the NUS about what their international position was and what it should be. A delegate from Leeds University argued that

> because NUS had always played a leading and dynamic role in the international student sphere it could continue to do so by saying they really desired student co-operation and student unity but the existence of these two structures [IUS and ISC] at present prevented this and NUS should keep out of both and speed the day of world student unity and co-operation.[73]

This statement was met with 'prolonged applause', but was not the end of the debate. For many members, whose views were voiced by the executive, the NUS was spending too much time discussing international affairs at council meetings and this would best be done at an international forum like the ISC. While the NUS did pass a resolution ratifying the ISC charter, they did not fully join the organisation in 1965. Instead they passed a resolution about the NUS's own international position, saying that council,

> aware that its major responsibility lies in the promotion of the educational, social and general interest of its members, believes that:
>
> (a) it has an obligation to strive to give the maximum aid, both material and moral, to the students of the world and to strive for a genuine unity and co-operation in the international field.
> (b) these interests can best be realised by NUS not allying itself to either the IUS or the ISC
> (c) NUS can play a most positive role by seeking limited agreements with ISC and IUS on specific programmes adopted by Council
> (d) there is a grave danger for the world student community in the rigid division into two organisations separated by the cold war.[74]

The NUS wanted to do what the British government was seemingly unable, or at least unwilling, to do and break out of the Cold War mould. The NUS, like CND discussed above, were trying to supersede the Cold War divide, facilitating unity and providing leadership to students around the world.

This was not, however, the final word on NUS involvement with these international organisations or indeed NUS's role on the international scene. Between the November 1965 Council meeting and the following one in April 1966, the executive undertook a concerted effort to convince local groups that the NUS should become members of the ISC.[75] The executive argued that not being a member of the ISC was harming the NUS's international position and appeared to students in the developing countries as an 'abandonment'. As a delegate from King's College London argued,

> Since when had NUS followed, rather than led? Surely they had to lead international commitments? Surely NUS had stability which other unions had not got? For God's sake, why could they not grasp this opportunity and lead and not follow as so many had tried to make them do in the past.[76]

After a debate which lasted more than an hour and a half, the decision was finally taken for the NUS to rescind its previous decision and apply for full membership to the ISC.[77] Once again, however, this decision was taken in order to encourage and substantiate the NUS's international position as a leader in world affairs. The NUS leadership believed that it was only by participating in these organisations that the NUS could lead them in the correct direction away from politics and the Cold War divide. However, this decision did not remain NUS policy for long as it was revealed in 1967 that the ISC had been secretly funded by the CIA, precipitating another crisis within the NUS about its relationship to the ISC. Throughout these discussions what is constantly reaffirmed, and provides the one point of agreement between the various sides, is that the NUS had international responsibilities and a fundamentally crucial international role to play. Regardless of their involvement in any one group, the NUS believed that British students were relied upon by students around the world to show leadership on matters of human and educational rights.

Conclusion

Britain's international position after the Second World War was not what it had been. Financial constraints and the end of the British Empire

were coupled with the creation of two superpowers at the head of two competing blocs, which meant that Britain had to carve out its own space in this new system. This applied to all social and political groups within Britain, not just the state. In arguing for certain political actions, those on the British radical left were making claims about British nationality, and relied upon Britain being recognised as a strong international power. The source of this strength, however, was hotly debated. While the government maintained that possession of nuclear weapons was the only thing keeping them at the negotiating table, CND argued that it was precisely this which was hampering them from having real international clout.

Each of these groups assumed that Britain was an important international player. Even without the empire, perhaps because Britain was being re-formed as a post-imperial state, there was scope to increase Britain's international power rather than let it diminish. This was the end to which these organisations worked – to show British governments and the British people what post-imperial Britain should be doing on the world stage. The underlying belief of each of these groups in British 'greatness' was a legacy of empire and one which they hoped to use to forge a new, modern, post-imperial state. Over the course of the 1960s, in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the failure of Wilson's Labour government to affect real political, economic or social change, the strength of the British government came to be questioned, but the importance of Britain's reputation was not. Being British was still an important identity marker for members of these organisations as it gave them an international power that they would not otherwise have. The next chapter examines how this notion of British 'greatness' was influenced by Britain's relationships to other powers, particularly the United States, and the international organisations to which Britain belonged.

2
Britain's Relationships with Other Powers

In the last chapter we saw how CND, the AAM, the NUS and NICR movement held on to the idea of Britain as an international power. They argued for Britain's ongoing 'greatness' in the face of arguments about its 'decline'. The last chapter showed how these groups thought about Britain's world role, and ongoing British 'greatness' in isolation. Unfortunately this was never the case. Britain's international position, like that of every other state, is largely dependent on its relations with other states. In this chapter we move away from the focus on Britain's international position to explore how this was affected by its relationships with other states and international organisations. It was in comparison to other states, particularly the United States and Soviet Union, that Britain's apparent decline was measured. Britain's relationships with other powers, and the ways in which organisations such as CND, the AAM, the NUS and NICR groups viewed these relationships, gives an important window on ideas about Britain's international position at the end of empire. As Wendy Webster has argued, one of the dominant stories about Britain's world role after the Second World War 'claimed a continuing world role and power, authority, and influence for Britain through a "special relationship" with America'.[1] The United States was seen both as the key to Britain's ongoing international position or precisely what was going to undermine Britain's independent international role.[2]

Of the four organisations and movements under examination in this book it was CND who most vocally and consistently critiqued British foreign policy. CND took particular issue with the close relationship between Britain and the United States. CND saw Britain's relationship with the United States as preventing them from cultivating the independent international position which was discussed in the last chapter.

If Britain was too closely aligned to the United States, then it would not be able to be the leading moral power in the world. In the middle of the 1960s CND found French, British and American foreign policy 'deadly dangerous and morally grotesque', characterising it in this way: 'De Gaulle is for peace in Vietnam and arms for South Africa: Wilson talks of democratic socialism and condones American aggression: Johnson yearns for the Great Society and rains napalm on Asian peasants.'[3] CND faced a great deal of opposition to its foreign policy ideas both from within and outside government. This chapter examines the difficulty of the international situation for Britain in which other states no longer simply accepted its pre-eminence. In creating a post-imperial Britain both the British government and the organisations explored here needed to think about and negotiate new relationships for Britain with other world powers. First we will explore the perception within the radical left of the United States and the Anglo–American 'special relationship', before exploring their attitudes to Europe and to intra-governmental organisations, particularly the UN and NATO. CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement each demanded that Britain provide a leadership role by eschewing close alliances and leading international organisations down the correct moral path.

Negotiating the Cold War – The Problem of the 'Special Relationship'

The relationship between the United States and United Kingdom was never an easy one. The idea that there was a 'special relationship' between the two nations is a relatively recent one, although a number of scholars have tried to trace it back to the beginning of the twentieth century or earlier.[4] Whether there was indeed a 'special relationship' at all has been the subject of keen debate among scholars.[5] Yet, there is little doubt that there is a unique relationship between these two states. The history of the United States as a former British colony, which successfully waged war against the 'mother country', ensures that this is so. In the twentieth century, the international position of the two states alone would be a substantial and reasonable basis for their relationship to be 'special' in some way. In the postwar period the common popular and scholarly trope describes this relationship as one of shifting power. As the United Kingdom's international power and prestige has waned, so the United States has become the predominant international superpower. America was thus the locus through which Britons talked about their relative international decline.[6]

The relationship between these two states has gone through a series of peaks and troughs which depend on a myriad of domestic and international circumstances. In terms of the domestic circumstances in Britain the special relationship is largely seen to have ebbed in periods when Labour was in power and flowed when Conservatives were in charge.[7] The vast majority of the literature about this relationship focuses on high politics and refers to 'Britain' or 'Whitehall' feeling or acting in a certain way in opposition to, or in concert with, 'Washington'. What this story fails to illuminate are the varying and competing voices within each of these states who supported or raised concerns about this relationship. While there have been a number of recent works which stress the importance of personal relationships and focus on changes in leadership, this does not tell the whole story.[8]

In the early 1960s a Gallup Poll showed that the majority of British people thought that Britain's alliance with America was not nearly as important to its international standing as was the Commonwealth.[9] Hopkins and Young trace popular anti-Americanism in Britain back to the war years, but argue that it reached a new intensity in reactions to the Vietnam War.[10] In the late 1940s and early 1950s there was a popular narrative which showed the United States as envious of British history and heritage which was particularly evidenced in America's interest in the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.[11] This also fed into the narrative of America as a young and inexperienced nation in need of tutelage and support from Britain, which was used to great effect by Ian Fleming in his James Bond novels.[12] It is most often assumed within the literature on the Anglo–American relationship that the British left was the most uneasy about America. In the 1950s and 1960s the Anglo–American relationship was the focus of a great deal of soul searching on the radical left as it was throughout British politics and society.[13] The left was not universally anti-American, although there certainly were many people who adhered to this view within the left. In fact, according to Ashton, anti-Americanism was widespread across the political landscape in Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s and seriously constrained Macmillan's foreign policy alternatives.[14] Ashton attributes some of this attitude to 'the jealousy of the middle classes, or the protests of the anti-nuclear activists', but asserts that these were not the only reasons for anti-American sentiments. Instead these feelings were spurred by a much wider 'sense that Britain was on the one hand being bled of its human resources and on the other exploited by US commercialism'.[15] Attitudes towards America fed into wider questions about what Britain was and what it should be and often followed the lines of the Cold

War. For some, American 'progressiveness', their rhetorical adherence to the ideas of egalitarianism and lack of hierarchy, was a good thing that should be emulated.[16] Yet, for most on the left, America symbolised the capitalist system and was, therefore, seen as inherently immoral, unfair and unequal. These dynamics were further complicated by the Cold War, which tended to see any criticisms or concerns raised about the United States as support for communism or the Soviet Union.

The British peace movement was alternately accused of being pro-Soviet or pro-American. The US media were keen to report on supposed anti-Americanism within Britain. They found 'that Britain was soft on communism and favoured appeasement', which, it is argued, was 'reinforced in this period by reports of the activities of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament'.[17] CND tried to fight both of these accusations and present themselves as neutral and outside Cold War politics. In a 1962 edition of *Sanity* an article tackled the accusation that CND was pro-Soviet and anti-American. CND was adamant that 'not in its four years [had they] moved a single step towards accepting the Communist version of the cold war', but that they had 'marched and petitioned against Soviet tests as energetically as we have campaigned against American and British tests'.[18] The charge that CND were a front for communism prompted some in the group to be increasingly critical of the United States. The argument ran that as CND and Britain were within the Western bloc, they had more right and more responsibility to criticise their allies. Living in a democratic state, it was argued, made them responsible for the actions of their own government.[19]

CND highlighted their neutrality and treatment of all nuclear powers equally again in the summer of 1962 when the United States resumed nuclear testing. *Sanity* reported that

> day and night since the United States of America resumed nuclear tests, members of the Campaign for Nuclear disarmament have kept up a vigil of protest outside the American Embassy in London. If the Soviet Union holds another series of tests, another vigil of protest will be maintained outside the Soviet Embassy.[20]

As they clearly stated a few months later, 'for CND there cannot be one law for the Americans and one for the Russians: we are neither the Conservative Party nor the Communist Party.'[21] The charge that CND was anti-American was also levelled against its most important campaigning tool, the Aldermaston March. In 1964, CND stated matter-of-factly that Aldermaston was not 'an anti-American jamboree' which they hoped

to prove by inviting a number of high-profile American peace and civil rights activists to attend the march.[22]

Despite their rhetorically adamant neutrality CND did undertake some actions that had an anti-American bent.[23] CND's attitude toward the United States shifted over the course of the 1960s in concert with wider trends within the British left. Whereas they were concerned to prove that they were not anti-American in the early part of the decade, by the middle of the 1960s as the Vietnam War began to heat up, it was much more acceptable to be openly anti-American.[24] By the end of the 1960s their newspaper was dominated by criticisms of American actions in Vietnam and around the world.[25]

Their growing anti-Americanism was based on CND's assessment of the United States as the biggest threat to world peace and as morally degenerate. The view of America as a threat to peace was most vocally put forward by Malcolm Caldwell. He argued that the British peace movement needed to 'express solidarity with the people of Vietnam, and [admit] that America's is the guilt'.[26] He was adamant that 'American imperialism poses far and away the greatest threat to world peace'. He thought the USA was most likely to use nuclear weapons, which was why 'nuclear disarmament is inextricably tied up with opposition to US imperialism'.[27] Caldwell was not alone in this view, nor was he without opposition.[28]

The other key criticism of the United States voiced by those on the radical left was that it was morally bankrupt. The United States was identified as 'hyper-modern' and associated with commercialism, consumption and affluence; all things that the left struggled to deal with during the 1960s.[29] As Black argues, America was used as 'shorthand for criticism of capitalism and the general tenor of post-war social change'.[30] This image of America had strong roots in the interwar period and was articulated by the intellectual left, including J.B. Priestley who was instrumental in the foundation of CND.[31] According to Rosen, Priestley and others were concerned that 'imported American culture would foster a soul-deadening uniformity' and this concern permeated into the lower reaches of society.[32] While it has been argued that anti-Americanism was confined to the middle class with young people embracing American materialism, this assessment does not fit the young people involved in activists groups who eschewed capitalism and materialism as much as their elders.[33] However, the assessment that the middle classes were particularly anxious about Americanisation and American values is borne out by an examination of attitudes within CND, the AAM, the NUS and some groups within the NICR movement.

On the international stage, too, American activity was seen to be lacking in moral fibre. This was clearly the case with regard to US activities in Vietnam, but this was not the only place where this attitude was seen. The NUS were also greatly concerned about the American government's involvement in the international student movement. The immorality of the American government was seen as a corrupting influence on the International Student Conference (ISC). The organisation was accused of receiving funding from the CIA in the 1950s, which many saw as a 'smear' that tainted the organisation in the eyes of many students.[34] This concern remained dormant for several years before it was printed in the American magazine *Ramparts* in 1967. This caused a great scandal within the international student movement and the NUS itself threw their long-standing cooperation with the ISC under scrutiny.[35] This continued to be a subject of concern and debate at NUS meetings into the 1970s, when this period was referred to as 'the dark and bankrupt days of its [the NUS's] involvement in the CIA financed International Student Conference'.[36] This CIA corruption of the ISC was evidence of the international dominance of the United States of which the NUS was highly critical. By the early 1970s the terminology used within the NUS to describe this American international attitude and influence was that of 'American imperialism'.[37] We will return to the implications of this in the next chapter. What is important here is the way in which the United States was used by both CND and the NUS as shorthand for immorality. They were intent on setting up themselves and Britain as a modern, forward-looking and moral post-imperial state which involved constructing the United States as the new rapacious and immoral imperialist power.

Some people within CND argued that it was precisely because of the threat the United States posed that Britain needed to keep a close alliance. It was the duty of Britain to stay a close ally of the Americans as they were the only ones that the Americans were likely to listen to and that had the wisdom and knowledge to steer them down the correct moral path. It was the responsibility of Britain to be the conscience of the Americans. This was an argument used in the mid-1960s in *Sanity*. There it was argued that it was 'Britain's good fortune that at this moment she, more than any other country, can influence the answers' to questions about American, Soviet and Indian actions with regard to nuclear weapons.[38] Whatever influence Britain maintained with both the United States and Soviet Union, it was argued, it should use to secure a peaceful and non-nuclear solution. This minority opinion persisted as an undercurrent within CND into the early 1970s.[39]

The British left were not just critical of the United States in its own right, but were concerned that a close relationship between the United States and Britain would have a negative impact on Britain. This negative impact was seen in several forms, from the undermining of Britain's international reputation and sovereignty, to putting Britain in increased physical danger, increasing economic concerns and damaging British values. CND was concerned that 'Britain's grotesque subservience to Washington has become an international sick joke' which was costing them 'friends in the non-aligned world and the socialist movement'.[40] British support for American policy in Vietnam and elsewhere, it was argued, was serving simply to 'discredit us [Britain] in the eyes of the rest of the world, and, let it be said, in our own eyes as well'.[41] CND argued that Britain's 'rigid attachment' to the United States was 'poisoning our relations with the rest of the world, and constricting our diplomatic position', and that government support for the USA had led to 'a general anti-American consensus in this country which has never before occurred on such a large scale', therefore defeating the government's purpose.[42]

Early in the 1960s CND was concerned that the Anglo–American special relationship meant that Britain was physically putting itself in harm's way as it was within the reach of Soviet missiles. In late 1962 *Sanity* described the current state of Britain as 'an advance missile and bomber base, as useful – and as expendable – to the Americans as Cuba may be to the Russians'.[43] *Sanity* made the comparison immediately after the Cuban Missile Crisis that if missiles had been fired from Cuba aimed at the United States they would have only had four-minutes warning. Kennedy clearly thought this was inadequate while four-minutes warning was all they would get in Britain if missiles were heading their way from the Soviet Union. The complaint, that 'what Kennedy considers adequate for Britain he evidently believes to be disastrous for the United States', shows both CND's concern about American hypocrisy and a feeling of betrayal.[44] CND believed that it was the responsibility of a great power to protect those who were weaker. They argued that Britain had this role in a number of arenas, but in the nuclear realm this responsibility was America's.

CND was also concerned that British foreign policy was subordinate to the United States, particularly when it came to Vietnam.[45] In 1964, *Sanity* reported on the Foreign Minister Butler's assertion that Britain had not been informed about American bombing of North Vietnamese naval bases, remarking that 'both the alleged incident and the American retaliation must have come as a complete surprise to the Foreign Office.

So much for our special relationship'.[46] The cost of the 'special relationship' was also questioned if it meant that 'we dare not breathe a word of public criticism in return'.[47] The influence that Britain had over American policy, CND argued, amounted to 'discreet midnight pressure' which had only 'irritated Johnson without affecting U.S. policy. If this is all the special relations can achieve', they continued, 'it should be discarded'.[48] By the middle of the 1960s there was a distinct sense within the left more broadly, and CND specifically, that British foreign policy was turning Britain into 'an appendage of the United States'.[49] To get away from this power relationship with the United States, Britain needed to 'dissociate. We must condemn America as an aggressor in the United Nations. We must withdraw from all alliances with her. We must close the bases, ask her troops to leave, and break the special relationship.'[50] CND collected petitions, wrote numerous letters, organised demonstrations and tried all available means to encourage the British government to dissociate themselves from American policy.[51] They urged the government to take a stand against specific events, like American bombing runs in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and oppose the stationing of US troops on British soil.[52] CND leaders sent letters to the prime minister and to individual MPs, organised demonstrations and made international contacts with others who opposed American policy in Vietnam.[53] By 1970, CND was clear that they did not want the British government merely to dissociate itself from US policy, but to develop 'an independent foreign policy . . . [and end] subservience to America in international affairs'.[54]

Maintaining the 'special relationship' had cost Britain politically, financially and also in terms of domestic policy. CND argued it was 'Alliance politics' that had 'forced us [Britain] to support American intervention in Vietnam' rather than 'laying the foundation of a New Britain by building new hospitals, schools and universities'.[55] This list of things that Britain could be spending money on if not for supporting America's foreign policy was used by CND to keep pressure on the Wilson government.[56] It was the Wilson government specifically who bore the brunt of these complaints, largely because it was so widely hoped and expected among the left that his election would change British foreign policy. Britain's support of American policy in Vietnam was sullying 'Britain's good name',[57] demonstrating the 'moral bankruptcy and political cowardice of the Wilson administration'[58] and showing the Labour government to be hypocrites.[59] Wilson was accused of regarding 'American dollars as more important than human lives'[60] and being too weak-willed to do anything about it when America

directly flouted their position.[61] The AAM, too, took up this attack on Wilson saying that his policy on Rhodesia and Vietnam was based 'on his analysis [that] the only power that needs to be taken seriously in present circumstances is the U.S.'. The AAM accused Wilson of being determined to retain the special relationship 'by hook or by crook'.[62] Wilson was thus seen as morally bankrupt, willing to succumb to the demands of the United States. And this weakness, CND intimated, came down to a financial dependence.[63] Supporting American actions was enabling Britain to 'maintain a "great power" presence East of Suez', but it was also 'imperilling British economic well-being'.[64] CND continued to argue that Britain had an important mediating role to play in Vietnam, but it came increasingly to be recognised that this role was circumscribed by the government's valuing of the Anglo–American relationship.[65]

This association of America with immorality gave fuel to the concerns voiced by the left that Britain was in peril of losing its individuality and being subsumed by America. They believed that there was a particularly British way of going about international affairs and that too close an association with the Americans would dilute British values, ideas and moral fibre. CND were keen to show where American and British policy could and should differ. In 1965 CND highlighted the Geneva Conference as a place where British policy 'could never be the same as American policy, since America had refused to sign the Geneva Agreements'.[66] This highlighted the British position as peacemaker and negotiator in the face of American intransigence. Supporting America's policies in Vietnam was even seen to have a corrupting effect on British youth who, Caldwell argued, resorted to violence at a 1966 demonstration because they 'just didn't want to be polite to the Americans any more'.[67] The quintessential British characteristic of politeness had been used and abused by the Americans to avoid criticism by their allies and these young people were exhibiting a frustration and destructiveness that their elders found disconcerting. There were also concerns that in being a close ally to the United States Britain was being identified 'with the neo-colonialist, racial and rich country's stance in the world'.[68] This statement clearly highlights the amnesia of Britain's imperial past that existed in the 1950s and 1960s. In order to distance Britain from its imperial past, to create a new post-imperial Britain, the United States was being constructed as the dominant imperial power. We will return to this issue in the next chapter. For the NUS it was Britain's relationship with the United States, rather than their own actions and activities, that was giving the

NUS a reputation as 'reactionary' among student unions in developing countries.[69] Britain was being portrayed as the moral, progressive and enlightened post-imperial state in contrast to American imperialist policy.

Yet, these groups were not universally critical of all Americans. They clearly showed their admiration for particular American activists who were fighting for the same values of equality and morality. Important international figures like Martin Luther King Jr and Bayard Rustin were welcomed to Britain with open arms and were often used as examples for action and activity in Britain. In 1964 CND hoped that Rustin and King would be present for the annual Easter march. They expected Rustin to contribute to the march in three distinct ways:

> as an organiser he will contribute his long experience of march organising, culminating in the March on Washington. As a speaker he will give the British movement a taste of one of the sharpest and most perceptive political minds on the American Left. As an entertainer he will display in peace and freedom songs the talents of a professional who used to sing with Josh White and 'Leadbelly'.[70]

The admiration for these two men clearly came through this report in *Sanity* as did the disappointment when Rustin and King were unable to attend the march. King did stop in London in 1965 on his way to Oslo to accept his Nobel Peace Prize. While there he 'participated in a programme of meetings arranged jointly by CND and Christian Action [and] . . . met leaders of Britain's coloured immigrant communities'.[71] All reports of Martin Luther King within the publications of these groups were done with an air of reverence. The Anti-Apartheid Movement, too, held King and other civil rights activists in high regard. They were keen to welcome King's widow to Britain in 1969 when she appeared to launch the Martin Luther King Foundation with an evening reception and fundraising event.[72] In the NUS, too, King was highly respected. Although there was concern within the organisation that figures such as Malcolm X were not treated with the same reverence, there was clear support of the NUS executive when they met with King on his visit to England in 1965.[73] The admiration of these groups for King and those surrounding him indicates that it was not America in its entirety that they objected to but the military might and foreign policy of the United States.

For civil rights activists in Northern Ireland the United States had long been a beacon of hope. Activists in Northern Ireland had assumed,

or hoped, that after the Second World War Britain's relationship with the United States would give Irish-American groups more power to lobby for the unification of the island.[74] By the early 1960s this hope had dimmed somewhat but civil rights activists continued to look to both the Irish-American community and increasingly to American civil rights leaders from whom they had taken much inspiration for support and assistance. The CSJ built up relationships with the Irish-American organisations throughout the 1960s hoping to use American support to pressure the British state to intervene in Northern Ireland.[75] PD also hoped to receive support from the United States. Bernadette Devlin went on a speaking tour of the United States in 1969 organised by Irish-American groups, although she did not appreciate their racial attitudes and instead ended up alienating the Irish-American organisations and building links with the Black Panther Party.[76] There was some division within the NICR movement about tactical questions and how best to use their American connections. However, throughout the movement there was a clear sense that American power and the Anglo–American 'special relationship' could be used to the benefit of Catholics in Northern Ireland.

The extensive discussion of the United States and the Anglo–American relationship among these organisations, particularly CND, was not matched by an equal discussion of the Soviet Union. Despite CND and the other groups' desire not to be seen as a communist front or predisposed to the Soviet Union, the vast majority of their vitriol was directed against the United States. CND often mentioned Soviet weapons and called for Soviet disarmament as well as the disarmament of Western powers. Yet Soviet society, the inequalities of the Soviet regime and Soviet activities on the world stage were rarely mentioned by any of the organisations under examination here. In fact, it was more often the opposite. In 1961 the NUS resolved to 'do all within its power to consolidate and extend the present friendly student relations between Britain and the U.S.S.R.'[77] However, they did criticise the Soviet state when they restricted the free association of students visiting Moscow.[78]

These organisations, CND, the AAM, the NUS and NICR movement, did not follow the strictures of the Cold War very well. They were critical of their countries' allies and relatively lenient on their enemies. They were not communist fronts as their critics often tried to argue, yet they clearly did hold with some attitudes more closely aligned with the communist bloc, particularly those which saw the United States as the aggressor in the Cold War conflict.

The European Alternative?

Throughout the scholarship on British foreign policy in the 1960s there is an assumption that Britain had a choice between the 'special relationship' with the USA, the Commonwealth and closer ties to Europe. With the end of empire the choice of American alliance or membership in the European Union is portrayed as a dichotomy. This dichotomy is also often portrayed as one that lined up with the political divide within Westminster with the Conservatives tending to opt for closer relations with America while Labour was more open to Europe. This is clearly not the case as it was Conservative Prime Minister Macmillan in 1963 who made the first application for Britain to join the EEC and Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath who finally brought Britain into the EEC in 1973. In fact, it was the extremes of both sides of the political spectrum, rather than either of the major parties, who were sceptical about Britain's involvement in Europe, although for very different reasons.

CND took very little notice of Europe or the European alternative in British foreign policy until the end of the 1960s. During Macmillan's bid for Britain to join Europe between 1961 and 1963 there was little discussion within CND, the AAM, the NUS or the NICR movement about whether this was a good policy. De Gaulle's veto of Britain's entry, while not specifically commented on by these organisations, did have a lasting impact. In 1966, when discussing Britain's 'world role' in the pages of *Sanity*, CND advocated a role for Britain in Europe, so long as they did 'not antagonise France by giving our first adherence to America rather than Europe'. They thought that any attitude which saw Britain as 'leading' Europe was 'silly' and should the government follow this line of action it would be 'humiliating'.[79]

CND clearly saw Europe and European integration as something which did not really pertain to Britain. While they largely ignored European developments this did not mean that CND was uncritical of the actions of individual European states, particularly the French. The French government had been the focus of CND action from the beginning of the 1960s when it too began to test nuclear weapons. The theme of a mass CND meeting to be held on 15 February 1960, almost exactly two years after the inaugural meeting of CND, was to 'Protest against Nuclear Madness'. The purpose of this meeting was 'to emphasise once more our unflinching determination to achieve nuclear disarmament and to draw attention to two big topical issues – the French Test in the Sahara and the American decision not to renew the ban on Tests'.[80] CND also picketed the French Embassy in 1963 when they tested nuclear

weapons in Algeria.[81] After 1966, when France withdrew its troops from NATO and asked NATO troops to leave France, CND argued that the British government should follow in De Gaulle's footsteps. However, they argued that this policy should be unilateral nuclear disarmament rather than an independent nuclear arsenal.[82] Concerns about Europe were not confined to France. In 1965 Youth CND included the West German, French, Italian and American embassies on the path of their march.[83] CND's interest in Europe increased in the early 1970s. They were adamantly opposed to Britain joining the Common Market, fearing that it would simply mean the nuclear armament of Europe.[84] They advocated a unified Europe as a 'third force' within the Cold War but this was a Europe in which each state was free to 'run their own affairs without interference from either Power' and depended on Britain joining as a non-nuclear nation.[85]

As mentioned above the NUS did not have particular concerns about British entry into the European Economic Community, but were concerned about the actions of some of their European neighbours. Because of their actions in the Algerian war, the French government was particularly singled out for censure by the NUS. A delegate to the April 1958 NUS Council reported on his recent trip to Algeria and commented on the unequal treatment received by Muslims in the state, although he did grant that the French were having a harder time of empire than was Britain due to the 'local position of physical violence' which, he said, they should remember when condemning France.[86] In November of 1960 the council 'strongly' protested against the actions of the French government towards the UNEF as a result of their stand 'in regard to the Algerian war' and instructed the executive 'to convey its protest to the French Government'.[87]

For Northern Irish activists European institutions offered another opportunity to encourage or pressure the British government to make changes in Northern Ireland. Appeals were made by the Northern Irish activists with the backing of the CSJ and National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL) to the Division of Human Rights at the Council of Europe to consider the situation in Northern Ireland.[88] In July 1968 the CSJ issued a press release regarding their appeal to the European court in Strasbourg.[89] Unfortunately, this process was outstripped by events late in the 1960s.

British entry into the European Economic Community was not seen as particularly threatening in the early 1960s, possibly because it was not seen as particularly likely. Yet, in the early 1970s, CND especially was concerned that Britain would lose its autonomy if it

entered Europe. Europe was not really seen as an alternative to the Anglo–American special relationship but simply another lever they could use to maintain and increase Britain's independent international power.

International Organisations

Increasingly over the course of the 1960s, each of these groups came to see multi-lateral organisations as the legitimate avenue for their grievances. While still appealing to the British government to take a lead in these international arenas, organisations like the United Nations were increasingly seen as the most legitimate holders of power. CND had always supported the UN, but through the middle of the 1960s this support became a dependence on the organisation to effect international change. In 1963 CND called on the British government 'to strengthen the authority of the United Nations'.[90] But only two years later they were advocating that British policy should be 'loyalty to the United Nations and acceptance of all the duties of membership'.[91] When explaining his resignation Canon Collins said that CND's task would 'not be completed till Britain is playing her full and proper part as a peacemaker under the sovereignty of the United Nations'.[92] It was not Britain's actions as a sovereign nation, but its membership in an international organisation, subject to its sovereignty, that was now important. CND encouraged Britain, and all other states, to 'shed their national loyalties and assume an international attachment', as this would empower the UN to play the role for which it was designed.[93] Britain, CND argued, should 'help equip the United Nations to take over the peace-keeping role which we arrogantly assume only we can fulfil in South-East Asia'.[94] The UN was thus seen as a legitimate forum for Britain to be involved in international issues as imperial power had been discredited. The importance that CND ascribed to the UN could also be seen in their demand that China be allowed to join the organisation. In order for the UN to function as an effective world government, they argued, all nuclear powers needed to be involved, which included China from 1964. CND's backing of the United Nations was based on their recognition that the international problem of nuclear weapons required an international solution. In the 1970s CND continued to 'call upon the British Government to press at the United Nations . . . for a comprehensive test ban treaty'.[95] CND continued to urge the British government 'to strengthen the United Nations by every possible means', believing that the UN had a vital role to play in Vietnam.[96] They continued to support Chinese entry into the

UN due to 'policies of international co-operation based on racial equality and on sharing world economic resources'.[97] They clearly still saw an important role for Britain within the UN, but it was the UN itself and its ability to pressure states that they thought would actually effect change.

Both CND and the AAM envisioned a leading role for Britain within the structure of the UN. The AAM urged the British government to support strong resolutions designed to isolate the apartheid South African state. The AAM tried to influence how the British government voted on matters relating to South Africa and to get the UN to pass measures with which the British government would be forced to comply. The AAM was greatly concerned by the UK delegates' speech against sanctions on South Africa at the UN in the autumn of 1961. They sent a copy of the speech to anti-apartheid leaders in South Africa for a detailed reply, with the intention of publicising it within Britain.[98] The issue of UN sanctions remained a top priority for the AAM the following year. They pressured the UN assembly to enact sanctions against apartheid South Africa by creating a statement supported by 'distinguished personalities' but originating 'from the AA Movement on office notepaper' which would be 'timed to be out around the period of the UN Assembly'.[99] When a vote was finally taken at the UN regarding economic sanctions they were discussed at the AAM National Council in depth. The Revd Michael Scott, who had recently returned from the UN, reported that 'the voting on the resolution was on almost racial lines, [with] the Scandinavian countries either abstaining or voting against'. Rosalynde Ainslie, of the AAM Executive, thought it was particularly important to 'draw public attention to the U.N. vote, and the position taken by the Western countries on the one side and the Afro-Asian and Communist countries on the other'. She suggested that they call 'for an arms embargo and [ask] . . . that Britain institute an enquiry into how economic sanctions could be effectively applied'.[100]

The UN continued to be a focus of AAM activity in the middle of the 1960s. In the autumn of 1963 they decided to 'put more emphasis on asking for international action through the U.N.', believing that international sanctions were necessary for ending apartheid and that the United Nations had a key role to play.[101] Even in the field of culture the AAM relied on the authority of the United Nations. When it appeared in 1965 that South Africa would violate the Berne Convention by allowing productions in South Africa to use material in copyright without the holder's permission, they agreed to refer the matter to UNESCO.[102] The AAM hoped to pressure the British government to work through

the UN, arguing that the best way to get the Security Council to move forward on these issues was by 'maintain[ing] a high order of public activity in this country'. However, they feared that the British government was not spearheading the drive towards sanctions but was in fact 'obstruct[ing] the adoption of anti-apartheid policies and resolutions'.[103] In 1967 the AAM acknowledged that many of their assumptions about the role of the United Nations in effectively using economic sanctions as an instrument of international policy against South Africa had come 'under heavy scrutiny and questioning'.[104] However, this questioning was not accompanied by any suggestions for new activity and the AAM continued to rely on the UN to impose sanctions. In the spring of 1967 the AAM agreed to publicise its cooperation with the United Nations Association, which had been achieved in the previous year.[105] Despite the importance of the UN, their resolutions were not useful if they were not implemented and, therefore, the AAM continued to highlight the task of international solidarity. They particularly wanted to isolate apartheid South Africa, highlighting 'Britain's responsibilities and obligations for the implementation of UN resolutions and the furtherance of campaigns for all-embracing sanctions against South Africa'.[106] The AAM was ambiguous about whether they expected the British government to lead or follow at the UN. They hoped that Britain would lead and, with pressure from the AAM, lead in the correct direction. But if they failed to do so, the AAM had no qualms about relying on the UN to force the British government to do what was right. The NICR movement too focused some of its energy on converting the UN to its cause. The CSJ and the CDU in particular took their demands to the UN. Conn McCluskey of the CSJ argued that this was to show the English that they intended 'to make our Campaign worldwide if we have to, to obtain justice'.[107]

Other international organisations were also addressed by these organisations. CND increasingly focused on NATO as a problematic international organisation for Britain.[108] CND had always been concerned about NATO membership and its policy, but from the middle of the 1960s they were increasingly fearful that Britain would be using its nuclear weapons through NATO rather than independently. CND also began to use other non-governmental organisations, like Amnesty International, to address issues that they were not personally able to.[109] But CND was not entirely positive about international organisations, particularly when it came to NATO. CND were adamant that Britain should leave NATO and thought the renegotiation scheduled for 1969 was the perfect opportunity.[110]

Conclusion

For CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement, Britain's international position was intimately bound up with its relationship to the United States. CND was clearly concerned that as long as Britain maintained the 'special relationship' with the United States it would not be the international moral authority that CND thought it should. CND were highly critical of the United States in its own right, seeing it as the biggest threat to world peace and morally degenerate. More importantly, they saw its influence as corrupting Britain. Being associated with the United States, they feared, would undermine Britain's sovereignty and international reputation. CND also feared that an association with a morally degenerate America would have an adverse impact on British morality, therefore attacking the key to Britain's ongoing international power and prestige. While it is certainly not true that the left was universally anti-American, within CND, the AAM and the NUS concern about too close an association with the United States was the dominant position. This view of the United States was complicated by civil rights groups in Northern Ireland who attempted to use the British government's desire to impress US leadership as leverage in their demand for equality in Northern Ireland. They hoped, largely in vain, that the power of US disapproval would require the British government to act.

While the United States was certainly not the only state with which Britain had an important relationship, it did dominate discussion within CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement. For these organisations Britain's relationship with Europe was only marginally important, and only really in the early 1970s. Britain's first application to join the European Economic Community passed without comment among these organisations. By the early 1970s, however, they were agreeing with the extreme right of the political spectrum who feared that British membership in the EEC would circumscribe British sovereignty and detract from its 'natural' position as leader on the international stage. According to these organisations, the end of empire did not necessarily spell the end of Britain's international position, but its bending to the will of the United States very well might. The main alternative to the special relationship offered by these groups was for Britain to rely on the legacy of the empire and the Commonwealth to keep themselves firmly positioned in the centre of the international political realm – a subject to which we turn in the next chapter.

3
Hanging on to the Imperial Past

As we have seen in the previous two chapters, the reality of the end of the formal empire was becoming increasingly clear through the 1960s as one colony after another became an independent state. Despite what this could mean for Britain's international power, position and relationships with other states, the ending of empire was widely supported among the British left from the Labour Party through to the communist party and beyond.[1] There were long-standing strains of anti-imperialism across the British left that formed a unifying basis for CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement. Each of these groups, and the movements around them, were emphatically and vocally opposed to empire. But what exactly empire meant was not simple. It depended on perspective and changed over time. What CND, the AAM, the NUS and NICR activists objected to was the inequality of empire. The term 'empire' had become associated with 'militarism, despotism, and domination', ensuring its unpopularity both during and after the Second World War.[2] But there was some attempt to rehabilitate the empire in the aftermath of the Second World War. As Wendy Webster has argued, during and immediately after the war the popular understanding of empire was that of a 'people's empire', which carried on from the 'people's war'. This showed the British Empire in a positive light, unified while racially and culturally diverse. The construction of Indian independence in 1947 as a peaceful transition of power and the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953 both depicted empire in this light. However, through the 1950s, as news about colonial wars penetrated the metropolis, this narrative of empire began to shift to one in which empire was a threat to Britain. The empire thus became a 'historical burden' for the British that they were mercifully escaping. Thereafter, empire was the 'subject of memory and nostalgia, it was claimed as British history and British heritage', but

was clearly and distinctly separated from Britain's modern, post-imperial reality.[3]

This process was not clear, straightforward or necessarily conscious. It was also not a process that was unique to the left. We can see this movement away from empire, to distancing Britain from empire or forgetting about empire within the political right as well. One such example is Enoch Powell. Powell was a convinced imperialist in the immediate postwar period, saying in 1952 that Britain 'was dependent on empire for the very structure of its existence'. Yet by the early 1960s he 'denied that Britain had an imperial past'. He now attempted to construct 'a version of nation that was shorn of imperial identity, not through the process of decolonization, but through dismissal of its imperial past as a "myth" '.[4] This dismissal of empire was a key aspect in the creation of post-imperial Britain. By the late 1960s the NUS could state without controversy that 'the zenith of British industrial and imperial dominance had passed' and that in reality 'Britain was a small country with negligible . . . resources'.[5] However, this process of distancing or collective amnesia about empire was variable and non-linear throughout the decade.

The end of the formal empire was a clear and measurable achievement that many organisations and people supported. This aspect of the end of empire, the transition of power and sovereignty to former colonial states, has preoccupied many scholars both because of its importance and because of the ease of quantifying and defining it. But empire was more than simply direct governmental control. As the terminology of empire became associated with negative aspects of domination, attempts were made to resuscitate 'positive' aspects of empire, and these were increasingly associated with the Commonwealth. There was a concerted effort made by the British government to distance Britain's history of empire from the postwar Commonwealth. In 1952, Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, gave a speech for the European Services of the BBC in which he stated that 'those who thought the Commonwealth still meant imperialism were "sadly out of date" '.[6] Lord Salisbury, and the Churchill government more generally, were, according to Wendy Webster, attempting to 'associate the Commonwealth with modernity, democracy, and freedom' and emphasise 'the idea that the terminology of the empire was passé'.[7] This view of the Commonwealth was embraced by those on the radical left in Britain. It was through the modern and progressive Commonwealth that, they argued, Britain could reclaim the power and prestige that it deserved. This transition from empire to Commonwealth has been

largely overlooked within social and cultural histories of the postwar period. Too often scholars have simply looked at the governmental transitions from empire to Commonwealth without exploring how people outside of these circles dealt with this transition. Wendy Webster and Kathleen Paul have made some attempt to rectify this oversight.[8] What has most often been overlooked is that there was not a clear or singular transition point between empire and Commonwealth within the popular understanding in Britain. Instead, understandings of, and terminology used about, empire and Commonwealth were fluid and shifting throughout the period from the 1940s to the 1970s. The government had a vested interest in seeing the Commonwealth emerge as a strong and powerful force in the international sphere and they were supported wholeheartedly by many people outside of government. In post-imperial Britain the Commonwealth was seen, both by those who had supported and those who had criticised empire, as a key means by which Britain could maintain its international position. This chapter explores the importance of the imperial legacy, both directly and through the Commonwealth, to discussions about Britain's international position. Even for those on the radical and anti-imperial left, the empire and its legacy remained a cornerstone of thinking about Britain's international position at least into the 1970s. This chapter demonstrates the left's complicated relationship with empire. In attempting to construct a progressive, moral and modern post-imperial Britain, they both opposed empire and relied upon it. They needed Britain's imperial legacy to accomplish their goals and hoped to do so by relying on Britain's role in the Commonwealth. Within their critique of empire was also the expectation that the power and international importance that it gave Britain would remain.

Anti-Imperial Rhetoric

CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement were emphatically anti-imperial. They were all clear on this point. Yet by the late 1950s and early 1960s it was often taken for granted. From the middle of the 1960s we can see within these organisations the attempt to distance Britain from the legacy of empire. They did continue to criticise empire and imperialism but began to move away from viewing or discussing Britain as a particular imperial culprit, particularly in relation to other states such as the United States and South Africa.

From the middle of the 1960s CND began to talk about the activities of the British government as trying to create a 'neo-colonial' Britain.

They were highly critical of this activity and 'vain boasts about Britain's "unique role" east of Suez'. There was never any sense of hypocrisy about this attitude within CND given that they, too, were arguing that Britain should have a unique international position.[9] CND also used imperialist terminology to berate the Wilson government for their international relations decisions. CND's criticism of imperialism shows the deliberate amnesia about Britain's imperial past that was being cultivated in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Part of this rewriting of Britain's imperial past depended on depicting the United States as the current, and much worse, imperial power. CND argued it was 'American imperialism [which] poses far and away the greatest threat to world peace'.[10] While CND admitted that 'the British, after all, have had aberrations of their own' in their past, they persisted that 'the nagging feeling exists that whereas Suez and Cyprus were the dying spasms of a decaying Empire, the Vietnam war is the muscle-flexing of a new infant, created in the old imperialist image'.[11] Britain had learned its imperial lessons, their most recent mistakes had been the dying breath of the empire. However, the United States was intent on setting up a new, robust and somehow worse empire. This distancing of Britain from the new and increasingly bad aspects of imperialism was a crucial aspect of rehabilitating Britain as a new, modern, moral, post-imperial leader of the progressive Commonwealth.

The AAM, too, were emphatically anti-imperialist, but once again it was not necessarily the British Empire that bore the greatest extent of their wrath. They did believe that the British Empire had created many of the current problems in the world that the AAM were trying to fix, but others had outstripped the British Empire as the main problem. Instead it was those things which had filled the vacuum of power when the British Empire retreated that were the real issue. Increasingly over the course of the 1960s the AAM came to see the South African state as attempting to build a little empire in Southern Africa, spreading their inequitable system to neighbouring states. In 1970, AAM held a conference titled 'Britain & South Africa – Partners in Imperialism', which attracted 500 attendees.[12] For the AAM it was particularly Britain's support for South Africa and their empire-building which showed how distasteful empire truly was.[13]

The NUS made the clearest and earliest statement against empire. They stated several times, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and in the decades that followed, that they were emphatically anti-imperial. They saw imperialism, or colonialism, which they used interchangeably, as 'a state of society which militated against the

development of Higher Education'.[14] The NUS constitution forbade it from making political statements, but they did manage to bend the rules to condemn colonialism and imperialism. The NUS executive and council reiterated this stance on imperialism several times over the years, noting that they opposed 'colonialism where it affected students'.[15] But this did have its limits. They did not 'actively' oppose imperialism. The NUS refused to participate in the violent overthrow of imperialist regimes or organisations, like the IUS, which demanded such active involvement.[16] By the end of the 1960s, it was not the UK which was seen by the NUS as the paramount, or sole, colonial power to which they were opposed. They clearly identified South Africa as an imperialist power.[17]

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, NUS's opposition to the British Empire came to focus on the rapidly deteriorating situation in Northern Ireland. In opposition to the British media portrayal of events in Northern Ireland, delegates at the NUS conference worked tirelessly to ensure that the NUS saw and understood the situation in Northern Ireland as an imperial one. They used the NUS's long-standing anti-imperialist stance to demand that the NUS take a stand on the events in Northern Ireland. As Miss Hoey, a member of the NUS Executive and delegate from Queen's University Belfast, stated in 1971, delegates 'must avoid seeing N. Ireland problems in terms of sectarianism. They could only really discuss these problems if they saw them in terms of imperialism in Ireland'.[18] At the next council meeting the NUS passed a resolution stating that the solution to the problems in Northern Ireland

> can only be through the self determination of the Irish people in a united Ireland but [Council] recognises that the role of British Imperialism and the Unionist Stormont Government has been to divide the working class of Northern Ireland along sectarian lines.[19]

This language became even more strident the following year. The minutes of the NUS council meeting in April 1972 state that the 'conference hall rang with bitter denunciations of British imperialism when delegates, turned, with wrath, to the agonies of Hibernia'.[20] It was at this conference that the NUS council passed a resolution condemning the imposition of direct rule in Northern Ireland, arguing that it 'exposes even more clearly the imperialist nature of British interests in N Ireland'.[21] An extraordinary meeting of the NUS council was called in January 1972, in part to discuss the deteriorating situation

in Northern Ireland. Ironically, it was held the same weekend as the Bloody Sunday shootings in Derry in which British paratroopers shot and killed 13 civilians and wounded a fourteenth.[22] At this meeting the NUS passed a far-reaching and strongly worded resolution condemning 'the oppression of the Irish People by British Colonialism and latterly by British Imperialism', and they condemned what they called 'acts of brutality' perpetrated by British troops against the civilian population in Northern Ireland. Most controversially they condemned 'the misrepresentation by the press and mass media of the civil rights movement and the IRA' and supported 'the resistance shown by the people of Northern Ireland to the army and police and . . . the actions which are committed in self-defence of anti-Unionist communities by all groups in Northern Ireland including both wings of the IRA'.[23] The NUS's criticism of imperialism was a key aspect of their identity throughout the postwar period. In the years immediately after the war this criticism was focused on British imperialism. Through the 1960s it gained other targets, including South African and American imperialism. CND and the AAM too highlighted the new imperialism of the United States and South Africa in the mid- and late 1960s. However, in the early 1970s it was once again British imperialism which was the focus of the NUS's ire as it touched those closer to home in Northern Ireland.

Using the Empire

By the 1960s there was a sense of popular amnesia about Britain's imperial past. In 1963 CND's newspaper *Sanity* stated quite boldly that 'we lost the role of Empire builder when the Empire revolted, and in many cases, fought for and won its freedom'.[24] The empire was clearly seen as something that was now gone, that had been taken away from Britain in one fell swoop and left no lasting legacy. Despite this dismissal of, and amnesia about, Britain's imperial past, the AAM and the NUS argued that Britain still had imperial responsibilities. These groups tried to use these obligations to improve the lives of people in the colonies and protectorates. This built upon a move from within government in the early 1940s, which carried on in the immediate postwar period, towards promoting imperialism as a benign force. Webster refers to this attitude as a 'post-war Welfare empire' which matched the growth of the welfare state.[25] Both the AAM and the NUS tried to use this image of the progressive welfare empire to encourage the government to act in a variety of places around the world.

While the AAM remained focused on the South African government's policy of apartheid, they were also concerned about Britain's ongoing imperial holdings and protectorates in Southern Africa. In 1960 they raised concerns about South African refugees fleeing to the British protectorate of Bechuanaland, now known as Botswana.[26] The AAM demanded that British-controlled territories act as a safe haven for those fleeing South African apartheid. But they were not only concerned about South African refugees. They also worked to promote changes for the benefit of the citizens of British protectorates themselves. In 1960 the AAM asked the government 'for more detailed information and facts on the protectorates' before proceeding to push for increased development.[27] In 1961 the AAM talked to the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF) and NCCL about improving conditions in the British protectorates. While the AAM were particularly concerned to improve things 'so that we [Britain] cannot be accused of apartheid in the protectorates', they were also working for the fulfilment of the view of empire as a benevolent structure.[28] Later in 1961 the executive committee put forward a plan for AAM members to lobby 'their local M.P.s on what economic steps were being taken to develop the protectorates'.[29] The AAM sought to ensure that while parts of the world remained under British control, they should benefit from it as much as possible. The AAM held the British government responsible for those people living in the remaining colonies and protectorates.[30] The AAM executive reported regularly on activities in relation to the British High Commission territories and protectorates in Southern Africa and the situation on the ground in these areas.[31] In 1963 they prepared a document on the High Commission territories and continued to plan demonstrations in support of anti-discriminatory activities there.[32] The success of these campaigns is difficult to determine. While they did clearly indicate to successive governments that attention was being paid to their activities, or lack thereof, in the protectorates it does not appear that much was accomplished to improve the lives of people in these areas. Certainly by the mid-1960s the AAM was using the lack of development and 'economic condition of the High Commission territories' as evidence of 'the enormity of the British betrayal' to these people.[33] Once again, according to the AAM, Britain had had an opportunity to use its power, economic and otherwise, in a progressive way to benefit people on the other side of the world and, once again, it had failed.

The NUS, too, sought to use Britain's continuing imperial role to ensure improved conditions for people around the world. In 1959,

the NUS Council received a report written by its international department which explored 'the existing opportunities for higher education for African students in countries where the U.K. had a special responsibility'.[34] As a result of this report the NUS resolved to call 'upon Her Majesty's Government to consider the possibility of establishing a non-racial University in one of the Southern African Protectorates'.[35] At the following council meeting, the deputy president reported that the NUS executive had received a letter from the Minister for Commonwealth Relations. The minister wrote that 'at present there were no concrete plans for the development of further higher education establishments in the three Territories' of Bechuanaland, Swaziland and Basutoland. While the NUS did not achieve what it wanted on this occasion, it is interesting that the government felt the need to communicate with the NUS about its colonial development plans.[36] Later that year the NUS council passed a resolution condemning the fact that 'existing higher education opportunities available in Kenya and the Protectorates, and especially the Trust Territories of Swaziland, Basutoland and Bechuanaland' were 'deplorably low'. They asserted that

> while H.M. Government still has a special responsibility in countries, it should take immediate steps to increase the opportunities to a reasonable level. Council further feels that so long as those countries are colonial, Trust or protected territories, their form of government should not prejudice the chances of having higher education opportunities without racial discrimination equal to those of independent countries.[37]

While they avoided specifically referring to the United Kingdom as an imperial power, talking instead of their 'special responsibilities' and areas in Africa as 'colonial', the NUS clearly saw the British government as responsible for the well-being of people in these areas. It is also clear that they believed the British government was capable of improving the situation there and was at least somewhat responsive to such demands.[38] According to one delegate at the NUS Council in April 1961, the British government had a 'legitimate authority' around the world. They 'could still exercise a measure of control over protectorates' and should use it appropriately.[39] The NUS clearly thought that despite the transition towards ending formal imperial control in many parts of the world the British government continued to have both a right and a responsibility to people in these areas.

In the middle of the 1960s, concerns about Britain's ongoing imperial role were particularly focused on the situation in Rhodesia. Rhodesia was a long-standing concern for the NUS and came to be a symbol of what was wrong with empire and Britain's imperial legacy for CND, the AAM and the NUS, and a point of policy comparison for Northern Irish activists. Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) for Rhodesia in November 1965 confirmed its minority white rule. While this act also technically meant that Rhodesia was no longer under the control of the British government, this did not stop many within the UK from demanding that the British government take direct action to remedy the inequitable rule of Rhodesia. Even some of those on the left advocated a direct British government intervention in Rhodesia which contravened their overt anti-imperialism and pacifism. We will return to the issue of the Rhodesian UDI in Chapter 8 where we will explore how it related to attitudes within these organisations towards 'race', but here we will examine the implications of the Rhodesian situation for attitudes towards Britain's ongoing imperial identity.

The AAM demanded that the British government intervene in Rhodesia to redress their apartheid policies. They were highly critical of the Wilson government's inaction, arguing that 'Wilson's government is determined to reach a settlement in Rhodesia which sanctifies white dominion and apartheid'.[40] The AAM held British policies as directly responsible for the 'emergence of a crude racial bloc in Southern Africa'.[41] Despite their strong anti-imperial roots, for the AAM, fighting racial discrimination and policies of apartheid were more important than opposing imperialism. They thought that because the British government would have a more benign or progressive attitude towards 'race' they should rule the country. Early in 1966 the AAM, along with a number of other organisations, set up a 'Rhodesia Campaign Committee' whose programme called for 'Britain to establish direct control' in Rhodesia in preparation for majority rule.[42] It was only by reinstating colonial rule that the majority in Rhodesia would get fair treatment. The AAM did not recognise Smith's independent, minority-ruled Rhodesia. In discussion of the situation in Rhodesia in 1966 the AAM continued to refer to it as 'the British territory of Rhodesia'.[43] In following years the AAM simply referred to 'the Rhodesian problem'. The AAM were clear that 'the only real alternatives in Rhodesia are white supremacy or majority rule' and demanded that the British government 'oust the Smith regime' rather than collaborate with the inequitable system.[44]

The NUS were also concerned about the situation in Rhodesia in the wake of Smith's UDI. Immediately after this declaration the NUS were

concerned about the plight of Rhodesian students in Britain. The NUS thought that these students were being punished because of their 'loyalty to the British Government' by having their grants revoked. While the NUS had very firmly asserted its opposition to imperialism, the terminology here is interesting. It appears that they were opposed to UDI because it was 'disloyal' to Britain rather than because the system that was being set up was unfair to the people living in the new state. The NUS voiced a particular concern for University College as 'the only multi-racial university in Rhodesia' and urged that 'the British Government . . . uphold its responsibilities in Rhodesia, thereby correcting these grave injustices against staff and students of educational institutions'.[45] The NUS were concerned, in 1965 and later, that the British government 'had not upheld its responsibilities to the people of Rhodesia'. In light of this it was decided in 1966 that the NUS needed to take a three-pronged approach. First, they supported protests at University College, Rhodesia against racial discrimination, second they sought to secure the entry of more students from Rhodesia into the UK and finally they decided to send an executive member to Rhodesia to assess the situation first-hand.[46] The president-elect of NUS in 1966, Geoff Martin, travelled to Rhodesia in the summer of 1966 to assess the situation. He reported on his trip to the November NUS council condemning the British government for failing to act. Based on the information that Martin had gathered the NUS sent a letter to the prime minister 'condemning the activities of the Overseas Development Ministry and calling on Mr. Wilson personally to intervene to rectify the situation'.[47] One delegate, an overseas student and also the president of the newly formed Zimbabwe Student's Union in Europe, urged NUS members to 'remember that Rhodesia was still Her Majesty's responsibility'.[48] This was a particularly imperial way of referring to the relationship between the two states, saying, as it did, that the Queen rather than the British government had a responsibility to ensure that human rights and equality were respected around the world.

For activists in Northern Ireland, Britain's imperial legacy was of the utmost importance. It was the British government's continued imperial powers that allowed them to bypass the Stormont government. It was clear to many within the civil rights movement that change would only come in Northern Ireland through the actions of the British government. In 1968 Conn McCluskey attempted to dissuade the CDU from holding a conference in Belfast because 'Belfast does not count.'[49] Conn clearly located power within England, both with the Westminster government, but, more importantly, with the English voter. For the

more radical PD, too, it was clear that power ultimately resided in Westminster. They reminded friends and supporters that Westminster had the power to intervene and also that it had the 'power to withdraw various subsidies as sanctions' which made a 'campaign in Britain for Westminster intervention . . . have decisive effect here'.[50] The Northern Irish Civil Right Association (NICRA) also clearly saw that Great Britain had a responsibility for the situation in Northern Ireland.[51] They argued that Westminster was 'responsible for the situation in the six counties' because they had 'played at being God when they set up the Belfast Parliament'.[52] The Westminster Parliament had 'ultimate legal and moral responsibility for whatever happens in the North' and it should, therefore, be the target of civil rights demands.[53] Britain's imperial role, it was argued, was important to acknowledge because that was how change could be affected, but it did not always sit easily with civil rights activists. In 1969, the executive of NICRA said that it was 'among the greatest ironies of Irish history that parts of NI are in open insurrection demanding that the British gov directly intervene', given their opposition to British imperialism in Ireland.[54]

With the introduction of British troops into Northern Ireland in the summer of 1969, the role of Britain as an imperial power in Ireland was much clearer and more often referred to by activists. NICRA saw the use of the army as a necessity because they were 'trained and responsible'. They thought the British troops had been accepted when first introduced 'because of the source of their control – Westminster', which was seen as a guarantee of their impartiality.[55] PD drew parallels between Northern Ireland and other British colonies in order to raise concerns about the treatment of the Catholic community at the hands of British forces. In the summer of 1969, PD voiced concern about who was in charge of the British troops in Northern Ireland and the way that many people within the Catholic community had accepted the troops. PD said they 'did not feel that a British military officer, especially one who had assisted in the suppression of the Cypriot people's struggle for freedom, could be the saviour of the oppressed people of N. Ireland'.[56] PD tried to remind people that 'the British troops are here to serve British interests' rather than those of any group within Northern Ireland. The troops were a 'sharp reminder of the reality of British imperialism in N. Ireland'.[57] When the situation become particularly uncertain in Belfast in the summer of 1969, NICRA's response was to write to the British government to remind them that they were the ultimate source of power and underline their imperial role in Northern Ireland. In the early autumn of 1969, PD still saw British troops as necessary in the short term to reduce tensions

although they always reminded their followers that 'as Irishmen we are not anxious to see British troops in our streets'. They spoke directly to the troops telling them they were recognised 'as fellow-workers' and calling on them to 'protect the ordinary people' and not to just blindly 'uphold a reactionary feudal clique'.[58] Those who were broadcasting from the 'free' area of Belfast in the summer of 1969 voiced a similar concern. They feared that Wilson could not be taken at his word because 'he told the same thing to the African people of Rhodesia in 1965'.[59] Wilson's betrayal of the black population in Rhodesia was clearly seen as akin to his betrayal of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland. For many civil rights activists in Northern Ireland the situation of Smith's UDI in Rhodesia and the setting up of an unequal governance based on 'race' seemed to show clear parallels to their own situation.

Throughout the 1960s CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement were critical of empire, but also tried to use Britain's ongoing imperial responsibilities to improve people's lives around the world. This was not a new idea, building, as it did, on demands made during the war. In order to promote British government activities in many of these places around the world, however, these groups had to assume a certain degree of British power and a level of imperial benevolence that was not easily reconciled with their anti-imperial attitudes. Thus the creation of a post-imperial Britishness relied both on the forgetting or amnesia about empire and the rehabilitation of imperialism as a benign and progressive force.

Using the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth was a key way that many people, both within and outside government, believed that Britain could maintain its great power status. The Commonwealth had been around for many years before the Second World War and, in fact, has strong historical roots.[60] However, in the postwar period the importance and character of the Commonwealth changed rather dramatically. In the aftermath of Indian independence the terminology shifted from the 'British' Commonwealth to simply the Commonwealth.[61] With the terminology of empire and imperialism largely discredited during and immediately after the war, the Commonwealth in the immediate postwar period came to represent all of the best aspects of the empire. Kathleen Paul has argued that 'the Commonwealth provided substance for Britain's pretensions to a world power role equal in stature to the new superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union'.[62] The Commonwealth language

and imagery was used extensively during the coronation and was associated with 'youth, optimism, and unity'.[63] The Queen stated in 1953 that 'the Commonwealth bears no resemblance to the Empires of the past'. Instead it was a community of equal independent nations.[64] Coronation year, according to Webster, marked 'a decisive break with an imperial identity seen as belonging to the past' and instead built up the notion of the Commonwealth as new and progressive.[65] While Webster notes that 'there remained some confusion about the exact relationship of Commonwealth to empire', she asserts that the terms 'empire', 'imperialism', 'colonial' and 'colonialism' were increasingly abandoned through the 1950s.[66] Yet, when we look in some detail at the language used by organisations on the left we see that this confusion persisted into the 1960s. Britain was still an imperial power in large sections of Africa in the early 1960s, so it was impossible to completely relegate this terminology to the past. Therefore, certain sections of the radical left attempted to claim the term and idea of Commonwealth and make it stand for all of the 'good' aspects of empire.

Both the AAM and NUS saw the potential of the Commonwealth as a multiracial organisation based on equality. Webster has identified this view of the Commonwealth as a moment of optimism which she dates from the immediate postwar period to the late 1950s or early 1960s.[67] David McIntyre too finds that there was a 'phase of multiracial optimism' about the Commonwealth, although he dates it to the period between 1960 and 1965.[68] While Webster and McIntyre's timings on this optimism only overlap slightly, they do clearly reflect the attitudes of the AAM and NUS who, perhaps because of predilection to utopian ideas, kept this optimistic view of the Commonwealth into the late 1960s or early 1970s. These organisations tried to use the progressive image of the Commonwealth to press forward their own programmes. There was an association between the Commonwealth and 'British moral strength' within the media in the early 1960s which these groups, particularly CND and the AAM, tried to use to their advantage.[69]

For CND, the Commonwealth offered Britain a new way of leading the world. While CND increasingly accepted that Britain could only be a second-rate power in dealings with the United States and Soviet Union, it could be the pre-eminent power in the Commonwealth. Britain, CND argued, could steer this large, progressive body in the direction that it chose and the Commonwealth could provide Britain with the international gravitas that it needed to compete with the superpowers. Once Britain unilaterally gave up its nuclear weapons, CND argued, they could

join with the smaller non-committed countries, many of whom were Commonwealth members, towards a better, more peaceful, world.[70] However, CND did not see this as an arrangement of equals. Instead, Britain's role would be to 'help [these states] . . . to raise their standards of living and to concentrate on peaceful development instead of armaments'. Britain, they argued, still had 'a unique chance to give the lead' among the non-committed states.[71] For CND the Commonwealth could provide 'a large and receptive following which can serve as a power-base for Britain's reassertion of world leadership'.[72] CND's view of the Commonwealth and Britain's role within it was very similar to British imperialism with a simple change of terminology.

For the AAM, the Commonwealth was central to the application of pressure on the South African government. The AAM were adamant to uphold the 'people's empire' image of the Commonwealth as a multiracial group of equals and use this to show how South Africa, and supporters of South Africa, did not fit into this ideal image of the Commonwealth. In the early 1960s they campaigned to have South Africa excluded from the Commonwealth 'while apartheid lasted'.[73] The AAM not only lobbied the British government, but many other Commonwealth members, asking them to vote against South Africa's admission to the Commonwealth in 1960. The AAM were clear 'that it was only the policy of apartheid which makes S.A. not wanted in the Commonwealth'.[74] The problem was not South Africa itself but the policy of apartheid which did not fit their vision of a multiracial organisation. This campaign was a cornerstone of AAM policy in 1960 and the beginning of 1961, before South Africa withdrew from the Commonwealth in May of 1961.[75] However, South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth did not mark the end of the AAM's use of the Commonwealth to change racial policies in South Africa. The AAM continued to demonstrate outside Commonwealth High Commissions on Commonwealth Day in 1963, to campaign for the cessation of Commonwealth preferences that South Africa still enjoyed and for an arms embargo to be instigated.[76] Commonwealth conferences remained an important focus for the AAM in their campaigning and lobbying through the middle of the 1960s.[77] In the late 1960s the Commonwealth too came to be a prime focus for the campaign against the inequitable treatment of blacks in Rhodesia.[78] The Commonwealth was seen by the AAM as one of the main organisations that could apply effective pressure to Rhodesia and encourage them to adopt an egalitarian democratic system.[79] The AAM had been critical of how the Wilson government handled issues with South Africa and Rhodesia, but supported their statement, immediately after the 1970 election in which Conservative

Ted Heath became prime minister, that for Britain to supply arms to South Africa would 'endanger the existence of the Commonwealth'.[80] It was clear that both the prime minister and the AAM, amongst others, saw the Commonwealth as valuable for Britain's international position. The successes that the AAM did see in the early 1970s, particularly the cancelling of a South African cricket tour in 1969, the AAM attributed in large part to 'Commonwealth pressure and the threat [that the tour posed] to the Commonwealth Games'.[81] For the AAM, the Commonwealth continued to be a progressive, multiracial and equal organisation that could be used to promote these qualities and values around the world.

This image of a multiracial Commonwealth was also supported by the NUS. Most of the NUS discussion about the Commonwealth was focused on overseas students in Britain, many of whom came from Commonwealth countries.[82] The NUS worked with the Commonwealth Secretariat to provide financial assistance to students in the Commonwealth who were struggling to achieve an education in places where racial discrimination prevented their access to higher education.[83] The NUS executive believed strongly in the power of the Association of Commonwealth Students, seeing it as a key way to improve the organisation's 'international student co-operation'.[84] For the NUS, the Commonwealth was another aspect of their international presence, one in which they, like the British government, had a leading role to play.[85]

The Commonwealth, therefore, offered these organisations a way to cling to Britain's imperial role while distancing themselves from the negative aspects of empire. The Commonwealth was rhetorically created to be new, modern, progressive and, importantly, multiracial and equal. It was a family of states. Yet, it was clearly a family of states in which the 'parent', Britain, had more responsibility, power and authority than the others. The Commonwealth allowed Britain the opportunity once again to lead the world along a moral and progressive path.

Conclusion

In the 1950s and 1960s it was clear that the left generally and CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement in particular, were anti-imperial. They strongly advocated the independence of former colonial states. Their criticisms of empire, however, fit into the rhetorical shift that was being constructed between empire and Commonwealth. By the early 1960s it was clear that the formal empire was coming to an end. Therefore, while these groups continued to criticise empire, this was increasingly seen as criticising an aspect of history. Over the course of

the 1960s these groups continued to critique the idea of empire and increasingly came to see the growth of other empires, namely those of South Africa and America, as somehow more brutal or cruel than the British Empire had been. While Britain did still have an empire, these groups hoped to steer it towards being a 'welfare' empire which would actively work to improve the living standards of people around the world. This only worked as long as Britain was formally in control of these areas. Thereafter it was the Commonwealth that became the focus for Britain's continued international power and authority. The Commonwealth was viewed as a progressive and enlightened entity promoting all of the best potential of a multiracial community of nations. The transition between empire and Commonwealth was not a linear one. Instead both notions existed side by side with empire increasingly divorced from Britain and Commonwealth coming to the fore over the course of the 1960s.

Together the first three chapters of this book paint a picture of how those on the radical left in Britain were helping to create an idea of what post-imperial Britain's international place should be. They clearly resisted the notion that Britain was in 'decline'. Instead they had a much more hopeful and optimistic view of what Britain's international role could be without empire. Britain's ongoing 'greatness' was assumed while they recognised that the basis of this 'greatness' might need adjustment. It was clear to CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement that Britain should continue to lead on the international stage. Post-imperial Britain could now take up the mantel of moral leadership rather than basing its power on military might in ways that imperial Britain could not. Of course, this depended on Britain following its own foreign policy outside of the Cold War divide rather than being too closely allied to the United States. While successive governments cultivated the Anglo–American 'special relationship', those on the radical left argued that this relationship was in fact detrimental to Britain's international power and prestige as well as its economy. In casting around for a 'new' basis for Britain's international authority they fell back on the remnants of the empire, the newly refurbished Commonwealth. The Commonwealth offered Britain the opportunity of being at the head of a progressive, modern, multiracial group of states leading them along a moral path. But in order for this to work, Britain and the Commonwealth needed to be clearly divorced from empire and its connotations of despotism, inequality and violence. Constructing post-imperial Britain required a level of distancing or amnesia about Britain's imperial past.

Part II

Post-Imperial Britishness at Home

4
Claiming Centrality

In their 2009 publication *NGOs in Contemporary Britain*, Matthew Hilton and James McKay argued that we 'need to better understand the power of NGOs . . . as forces impacting upon the way society perceives itself, conceptualises its problems, and selects the solutions with which to address them'.[1] The term NGO has largely been associated with organisations in the 1980s and 1990s, initially those concerned with international development, and it would be anachronistic to simply apply it to CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement. However, they were the precursors to modern NGOs and they too participated in the conceptualisation of British society, its problems and potential solutions. These groups also fit into the literature about social movements which, although extensive, remains dominated by sociology. It provides interesting and sometimes useful models for understanding these movements but often fails to put them adequately into their historical context. There is a dearth of literature which explores the importance and role of NGOs and social movements within specific historical contexts, particularly that which takes groups and movements seriously not only in their influence regarding their specific aims, but also examines the impact of their worldview and attitudes on larger debates.

In the previous part we saw that these organisations were often focused on the international situation. They were deeply concerned about Britain's international position and how this could be shored up without the empire. While their focus may have been international, the outlook and ability of each of these organisations to accomplish their goals was intimately linked to their location within British society. The extent to which they were listened to, and by whom, hinged on how the group was perceived both in who they were and where they fit within British society. Part II, therefore, takes a step back from the international

focus of these organisations to explore their location within British society. Chapter 5 examines the ways in which these groups conceptualised their audience – how they imagined the British people – while the final chapter of this part looks at the assessment of British society put forward by these groups and their sense of what British society should be.

But first, this chapter explores who these organisations were. There is sparse statistical data about the membership of these groups, especially in the late 1950s and early 1960s. What evidence does exist is deeply embedded in the historical context within which it was created and speaks to contemporary debates about postwar Britain and the British public. This evidence is also limited in that it identifies only active members or those who attended specific events. What is much harder to assess is the extent to which people supported the views and demands of these organisations but were not actively involved or attended events only sporadically. As CND and the AAM argued specifically, the number of paid-up members was merely a fragment of those who supported them and their aims. Therefore, who these organisations were is not limited to their membership. This chapter will also examine how these groups tried to position themselves within British society, particularly in how they responded to the criticisms and attacks that were levelled against them. Each of these groups depended on their British identity for their legitimacy. In locating themselves within British society these groups clearly defined the boundaries of British society. But they were also articulating an idea of what a post-imperial British identity should be, prioritising action and an involved and selfless citizenry.

Who Are These Groups?

Who exactly were members of these groups has been the subject of extensive speculation and myth-making. This is partly because it is almost impossible to determine accurately. CND resisted having a formal membership until 1964. The AAM too did not have official membership in the early 1960s. The same is true for many of the civil rights organisations in Northern Ireland. While the NUS did have membership lists, an outcome of collecting subscriptions, there is a clear division between those who were nominally members of the organisation, the majority of students, and those who actively participated in steering the organisation. This was a common issue throughout these groups and more generally in social movements. Social movements, and the organisations that develop from them, are often organised by a highly active and deeply committed core and surrounded by a much more amorphous

larger group who drop in and out of activism fluidly. The leadership of CND and the AAM were also often well-known or important figures compared to the majority of their membership and supporters. CND's leadership is often characterised as the 'who's who' of the radical left or 'a glittering array of the nation's progressive intelligentsia'.[2] Both CND and the AAM relied heavily on autonomous local groups who did not necessarily take up the message and campaigning activities offered by the national leadership in a clear or predictable way. The number and type of people who participated in the activities of these organisations can therefore only be discussed in general terms.

There were some contemporary efforts made, particularly in relation to CND, to examine the make-up of these organisations and the motivations of those involved. The most famous of these attempts is Frank Parkin's book *Middle-Class Radicals*, which was based on surveys he conducted of people attending CND protests in the middle of the 1960s.[3] Parkin's book was very much a product of its time. It was responding to concerns which had been growing in the late 1950s and early 1960s that the working classes had been undermined by affluence and embourgeoisement. Instead of being the source of radical demands for an improved society, many people in the Labour Party leadership now feared that the working classes were abandoning Labour and were content to sit in their new suburban homes watching TV.[4] Parkin's work set out to show that it was the middle classes who were taking up the mantle of radicalism. For Parkin this was part of a trend away from a focus on material concerns like unemployment and salaries, towards more 'moral' concerns. According to Parkin, 'whereas working class radicalism could be said to be geared largely to reforms of an economic or material kind, the radicalism of the middle class is directed mainly to social reforms which are basically moral in content'.[5] This argument fed into larger concerns about the 1960s as a 'permissive' decade and was used by later sociologists who tried to map this 'value-shift' in postwar Western societies.[6] Parkin also argued that participation in CND did not just mean that people were concerned about nuclear weapons, but was evidence of their position 'on a wide array of other radical and humanitarian issues'. Indeed, Parkin argued, 'identification with CND could be taken to be a capsule statement of a distinctive moral and political outlook, and support for its activities a means to affirming this outlook through symbolic acts'.[7] This assertion fuelled the growing popular understanding of demonstrations, particularly those of 1968, as the product of a group or generation of people who were simply different from the rest of society.[8] This generational understanding fed into other

wider concerns about youth in the 1960s.[9] It was widely believed, both in the 1960s and thereafter, that CND and other social movements were the product of a 'generation gap' and were largely the purview of the young.

But none of these ideas about CNDs make-up seem to hold up when the available evidence is examined. If we focus first on the assertion that CND was largely an organisation of 'youth', this is clearly not borne out by the leadership. The first president of CND, Bertrand Russell, turned 86 in the year that CND was founded. Canon Collins, the chairman between 1958 and 1964, was born in 1905 and the first general secretary, Peggy Duff, was just five years younger. One of the youngest members of the executive was Michael Foot, who was born in 1913.[10] This was clearly not an organisation controlled by the young. The make-up of their leadership also questions the assertion that CND was the result of a value-shift between those born before and after the Second World War. The leadership of CND were not people who had grown up in the aftermath of the Second World War having all of their material needs met and so had the freedom to fight for moral or 'post-material' issues.[11] All of these activists had long personal histories, both before and after the Second World War, of campaigning on moral or 'post-materialist' issues. While the extent to which the leadership represent the majority of CND supporters is, as already indicated, highly problematic, their make-up gives a clear indication of the character and direction of the organisation and its objectives.

A number of divisions that were not based on age did exist within CND. One of these was geography. There was a clear distinction between the type of people who participated in CND groups in London and other large cities and those in more rural areas. Urban groups more often included young men, whereas more rural groups were more often dominated by middle-aged women.[12] There was also a clear distinction to be made between those people who came on the yearly Aldermaston March, but were not active in CND throughout the rest of the year, versus those who regularly attended meetings. Unfortunately, the mapping of who was involved in these different types and levels of activity was never carried out and the evidence that we are left with is often anecdotal. CND positioned themselves as a truly British organisation with active branches in both Scotland and Wales and local groups in Northern Ireland. Yet, the archival evidence suggests that the connection between these regional groups and the national organisation in London was often tenuous and fraught. Communication was sometimes problematic and local and regional groups tended to work rather

autonomously doing what they thought best. They did, of course, adhere to the main principle of the organisation, the desire to 'ban the bomb', but the interpretation of what exactly this meant on the ground, in particular what sort of actions it encouraged, was open to interpretation. There is also a sense in some of the Scottish archives in particular that local groups resented London's attempts to control what they did or how they did it.[13] Despite the logistical problems of running a national organisation, CND in London clearly understood and imagined itself as a 'British' rather than English organisation.[14] CND may be an example of the conceit of some London-based groups who believed to speak for people throughout the country with little sense of what people in those places wanted. However, the loose and amorphous nature of CND and the simplicity of their message could also mean that the London-based leadership may indeed have been speaking for opponents of nuclear weapons across the country.

As mentioned above there was a clear internal division within CND between the leadership and the rank and file. It is widely accepted within CND literature that the organisation which emerged was not the one that its instigators or leadership really wanted.[15] Collins, Russell and Duff were clearly surprised by the number of people who came to the first CND meeting. Duff had to book three extra rooms and have the speakers travel from one to the other.[16] What Collins in particular wanted was a respectable pressure group, not the mass movement that developed.[17] The Aldermaston March has frequently been used to symbolise these two competing visions of what CND was, and what it was supposed to be. Stuart Hall, an active member of CND in the early 1960s, is quoted as saying that there were 'two styles of politics operating [in CND], conveniently symbolised by the Front and Back of the March'.[18] At the front were the respectable, middle-aged and middle-class, 'great men' who had the ears of politicians. At the back were young people, with diverse and varied political views, but little political clout.[19] It was those at the back of the march who have subsequently loomed large in the popular memory of CND, as is clear in the historiography about CND's 'youthful' membership. Yet, it was the executive, or the front of the march, who largely determined what CND would do and what its policies would be. It was the executive, with their particular point of view, that directed the organisation rather than any of the myriad groups or divergent opinions that made it up. Despite these many overlapping divisions within CND, those who supported the organisation were unified in their opinions about nuclear weapons and had much more in common with each other than with

the majority of the British public. While CND did manage to attract many thousands of people to its annual Easter march – the largest in 1962 attracted some 150,000 – they were never a majority within British society.[20]

The Anti-Apartheid Movement also did not have clear membership numbers through the 1960s. Although they tried to institute a paid membership subscription in the early 1960s, these numbers again do not necessarily reflect those who were locally active or who supported the AAM without ever officially becoming members. The AAM was organised in the summer of 1960. It was the formalisation of a movement that had been active since the autumn of 1959 to boycott South African products.[21] The Sharpeville massacre in March 1960 sparked international outrage and another rally in Trafalgar Square that called for the British government to stop supplying arms to the South African government and helped solidify the movement. The leadership of the AAM was based in London and made up of an executive and national council. The executive was elected and generally met monthly. The council was also elected but was much bigger, consisting of approximately 30 members representing groups and affiliated members, and met approximately once every two months. Between these meetings decisions were carried out by the officers of the organisation. Much less work has been done on the membership and support of the AAM than CND, but there are strong parallels between the two organisations. The AAM was, by the middle of the 1960s, strongly associated with youth and students, but was dominated by middle-aged leaders. The AAM leadership too had often limited control over the actions and activities of local groups. The AAM had the added difficulty of dealing with local groups who campaigned on apartheid but did not call themselves anti-apartheid groups, but rather anti-racism groups.[22]

The membership of the NUS is probably the easiest of these organisations to understand and reconstruct. That said the vast majority of the NUS membership were entirely inactive throughout this period. When we talk about the NUS, therefore, we are talking about a fairly small number of active and committed individuals. The turn-over in student organisations also means that this smaller group was constantly in flux. The student 'generation' is three-years long. For activism on the scale of the NUS the student generation is usually limited to one or two years of work. It was also true that not all active members of NUS were, in fact, students. There are cases of students being elected to an NUS position at the end of their studies and, therefore, representing students within a student organisation while they themselves were no longer students.

This sort of odd representational reality increased in this period when the NUS was able to win sabbatical positions for some members.[23]

There were a number of key issues to do with membership that the NUS dealt with in this period. One was geography. While the NUS executive was based in London like that of CND and the AAM, they had a more integrated regional structure. Representatives of student groups from across England, Wales and Northern Ireland attended each NUS council and all were eligible for election to the executive. There were also attempts made to ensure that issues raised by delegates from Wales and Northern Ireland were not simply lost in the general din of council, but this was often a point of contention among the membership.[24] The NUS worked to foster understanding and communication between the different national groups of its membership. They supported a yearly drama festival and debating competition in which students from different parts of the country would meet and be able to get a better sense of each other. They also produced a songbook which, it was hoped, would include 'songs from Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland' as well as 'songs from the Commonwealth'.[25] The vision of Britain put forward by the NUS was inclusive and attempted to integrate all of those within the United Kingdom as well as members of the current and former empire, which fit well into the idea of a 'people's empire' put forward by Webster.

The changing make-up of the student population in Britain in this period also had a distinct impact on the NUS. The size of the NUS and of their annual conference grew dramatically over the course of the 1960s as the number of students in higher education also grew dramatically. Before the 1960s less than 5 per cent of 18–19 year olds attended institutions of higher education. During the 1960s these numbers nearly tripled from 5 to just under 15 per cent and continued to climb throughout the rest of the century.[26] At the end of the Second World War the NUS represented students at 52 universities, 40 training colleges and 27 technical colleges with a total of 50,000 students.[27] By 1955 this had risen to 80,000. Student numbers increased steadily from 100,000 in 1960 to 750,000 by 1980.[28] This rapid increase in the student population meant that increasing numbers of middle-class, as well as some particularly bright working-class, young people were gaining access to higher education for the first time. This could not help but impact on NUS's perception of themselves and their place in society, a topic to which we will return in Chapter 6.

Just like CND, the AAM and the NUS, the membership of organisations that made up the NICR movement was also the subject of

myth-making. It was argued by opponents of the civil rights movement that civil rights groups were Catholic and Republican organisations set on undermining the Northern Irish state. The religious breakdown of these groups varied and depended to a great extent upon the community from which they emerged. What needs to be clearly challenged, however, is the assumption that because these groups were largely made up of people whose heritage was Catholic that they were only interested in the rights of Catholic people or were necessarily Republican and bent on eliminating the border thereby uniting Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland. There was also a common assumption made by supporters of these organisations, their opponents and those in power that because the majority of the members of these groups were Catholic that they spoke only for the Catholic community. This was not the case. Many of the organisations associated with the civil rights movement were keen to promote themselves as non-partisan and had Protestant members in their early years. The number of Protestant members of these groups did decrease significantly as violence took over the civil rights agenda, but in the period before 1968 there were a number of Protestants who supported the civil rights demands.[29] Some contemporaries argued, in an attempt to discredit the civil rights groups, that they were 'covers' for Republicanism, which is largely untrue. Contemporaries and subsequent scholars have shown that while there were certainly Republicans involved in the civil rights movement and individual civil rights organisations, the movement was not created by Republicans for their own ends.[30]

When we leave aside the issue of religion in Northern Ireland, which is rarely done, the civil rights movement begins to look like many other social movements in the rest of the UK during the 1960s. It was made up of a number of groups who sometimes worked together and sometimes competed. Each of these groups had widely divergent membership. For example, the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association, which was set up in 1967 as an umbrella organisation to try and unite civil rights actors, was dominated by middle-aged and middle-class people, many of whom had a long history of activism.[31] The Derry Housing Action Committee (DHAC), on the other hand, was a much smaller, more militant and younger organisation. Set up around a single civil rights issue, this group took much more radical action than did NICRA.[32] When reporting to the Cameron Commission, which was set up to investigate the violence which erupted during the civil rights march in Derry on 5 October 1968, the Society of Labour Lawyers was adamant in its statement that it was 'not true that only the [Catholic] "minority" came on [to] the streets'.[33]

Kevin Boyle, one of the first leaders of People's Democracy and a lecturer of law at Queen's University Belfast, agreed with this sentiment. He was interviewed for the Queen's student newspaper *Gown* in 1968, where he argued that 'every shade of religious and political persuasion can agree that these [civil] rights are fundamental'.[34] PD itself took an aggressively non-sectarian line. They outlined their values, also in the pages of *Gown*, as 'non-sectarianism and non-violence', which, they argued, combined to make them 'uniquely potent'.[35] In a letter to their supporters they described themselves as a 'mass democrative body' which was 'open to all interested in Civil Rights', which 'includes members of all parties and religions – or none'.[36]

It is well-nigh impossible to determine clearly and accurately the specific membership of CND, the AAM, the NUS or the NICR movement during the 1960s. Even with formal membership numbers, which only the NUS had, these do not necessarily reflect who was active within each group. What is clear is that CND, the AAM, the NUS and some groups within the NICR movement were largely made up of members of the middle classes. It is also clear that there were often strong divisions between the leadership of these organisations and the rank and file or membership in local groups. The mythic importance that has been ascribed to the 'young' in these groups, particularly in CND and the AAM, fails to recognise the identity of its leadership who were distinctly middle aged. What the historical record does not allow is an assessment of the wider support given to these organisations. However, the longevity and the long-standing importance that has been ascribed to the legacy of each of these groups and their wider movements attests to a substantial and wide-ranging support.

Positioning Themselves in British Society

Perhaps more important than who exactly belonged to these groups is how they attempted to locate themselves within British society. Although the term 'public relations' was not used by any of these groups, they were each concerned about their public image and sought to mitigate and control the view that the general public had of them. They each attempted to show their supporters and potential supporters where they fit within British society and why they were important. In 1959 Labour lost their third consecutive election, which prompted a deep and searching introspection within the party.[37] It also meant that groups on the political left, like CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement, all had to work harder to prove their legitimacy within the

British political landscape and respond to the criticisms levelled against them by their opponents.

CND portrayed themselves as clearly and unquestionably British.[38] It was CND's identity 'as a British campaign' which allowed it to call on the British government to act and respond to their demands.[39] One of the key ways CND attempted to show their place within British society was to align themselves with the radical tradition in British history. Margot Finn has identified this radical legacy as resting on the attitudes of patriotism, parliamentarianism and Protestantism.[40] This radical legacy informed the Chartist movement and other radical movements in the nineteenth century and CND actively engaged with this legacy in the twentieth century. In 1962 *Sanity* published an article titled 'Britain's Story of Protest', which clearly linked Aldermaston to a socialist rally in Trafalgar Square in 1882. This story was accompanied by a large photo of the 1882 rally next to a history of the Aldermaston March under the title 'This is our record'.[41] Two years later CND delved further back into the historical record, putting themselves directly in the footpath of the Chartists. The 1964 Aldermaston March was organised to assemble at Kennington Common 'where the Chartists assembled for their march on London' and was then to follow 'the Chartists' route, along Kennington Road to Westminster Bridge, and over the bridge into Whitehall'.[42] CND saw themselves taking the path of the Chartists physically, but also morally. According to CND, both fought against a government that was not listening to the people, and demanded that they take the moral high ground. CND also connected themselves to the legacy of Chartism and radical socialism through the songs they sung.[43] The leaders of CND were very much aware of the liberal, progressive and radical legacy of which they were a part. CND identified their predecessors as the Chartists, late nineteenth-century socialists, the Fabian society and A.J.P. Taylor's 'Trouble Makers'.[44] Many CND members also saw themselves as part of the tradition of conscientious objection, including Bertrand Russell who was himself a conscientious objector during both world wars.[45]

CND's construction of the British past and their place within it was highly selective. Like those people who reconstructed the history of the British Empire remembering only the positive aspects, CND recalled those parts of British history that painted their work in a positive light. Not all of their supporters, or more pertinently their opponents, saw the same historical connections for CND. Their opponents argued that they were not part of the legacy of Chartism, but instead were following the path of the appeasers of the 1930s. In 1964 CND supporter Richard Gott

took up this argument on the pages of *Sanity*, arguing that CND had 'no close parallel in the 1930s'. Gott spelled this out, saying,

> CND is not the Labour Party, havering [*sic*] over the problem of non-intervention in Spain; CND is not the League of Nations Union, concentrating mainly on education; CND is not the Peace Pledge Union, underlining a personal commitment. CND is none of these things – and all of them. It has its roots in the dissenting tradition of British history and it has associations with all the anti-war movements of past centuries. But essentially it is something new; a new response to an old problem; a new challenge to a disintegrating order.[46]

Gott was treading a fine and somewhat precarious line here between nostalgia and modernity. He played up CND's historical connection to the radical tradition, reassuring readers of *Sanity* and supporters of CND that they had a legitimate place in British society and an equal claim to defend and define Britishness. But he also had to assure some readers that they were involved in something new and innovative. To some CND supporters, particularly the young, it was CND's uniqueness rather than its place within British traditions that made it exciting and worthy of their backing.

CND's rhetoric of longevity and their concern to show the historical precedence for their activity was a direct response to the criticism that they attracted. They identified the arguments of their opponents who said that opposition to nuclear arms was done by 'traitors and subversives'. They tried to turn this attack on its head, arguing that it was only CND, in their fight to prevent Britain from being destroyed by nuclear weapons, who were really loyal to Britain.[47] This argument was particularly voiced during the 'Spies for Peace' scandal in 1963 when anti-nuclear activists publicised top secret military information. CND distanced themselves from any responsibility for the incident, it was in fact another anti-nuclear group, the Committee of 100, who had obtained and distributed this information. The Committee of 100 had broken away from CND in 1961, led by Bertrand Russell. Their relationship with CND will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 7. Despite the fact that CND had not been involved in obtaining and distributing the 'Spies for Peace' information, they came under attack from the media, who did not distinguish between different anti-nuclear groups. CND therefore defended those responsible, and in turn themselves. They argued that those who distributed this information were

in fact showing their patriotism by giving the British public the facts they needed to understand their plight and fully assess their political leaders.[48] According to CND the loyalty of those involved was to the British public, not to political leaders. CND's differentiation between loyalty to the British public and loyalty to the state or government was again highlighted later in the year. When Sir Alec Douglas-Home became prime minister after Macmillan stepped down, a statement he had made a few years previously was revived by the press. It was revealed that when he had been foreign secretary in 1961 Home was reported as saying that 'the British people are prepared to be blown to atomic dust if necessary'. CND strongly objected to this, particularly to the fact that Home had made this comment without 'actually consulting the British people'.[49] CND argued that they were in fact much more loyal and concerned about the health and well-being of the British people than even those in government.

The AAM were not accused of being subversive or trying to undermine Britain as CND were. Instead, they were simply discounted as 'un-British' and were subject to attack on this basis. At the extreme end, the AAM were targeted for physical attack. This was particularly the case in their early years when Oswald Mosley's far-right Union Movement attacked AAM supporters at public meetings and demonstrations.[50] While less extreme, the AAM were more often verbally attacked by their opponents as being an arm of the African National Congress (ANC) or Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), and as either a biased political organisation unworthy of real engagement or, perhaps more damaging, a mouthpiece for foreign political organisations. This attack was even more difficult to overcome than that levelled at CND as it stripped the AAM of legitimacy in speaking to the British public. An 'alien' or 'foreign' group, as AAM was accused of being, could not attract publicity or appeal to their fellow British citizens in the same way as a British organisation could. The AAM knew that their ability to 'maintain public interest and support for the struggle in South Africa' depended on their working within Britain and being seen as integral to British society rather than as an external force.[51] They saw themselves as 'British people' and that their actions represented the attitudes of the British public.[52]

The identity of the AAM as a British organisation was one they took very seriously during the 1960s. Christabel Gurney argues that the impetus for the AAM and the key people behind its creation were all South African in origin.[53] But the AAM did not want to be a South African organisation in Britain. Instead, Gurney argues, they 'aspired

to be an autonomous and democratically run British mass movement', even though their activities continued to be driven from South Africa.[54] The number of South Africans versus Britons on the executive committee was raised as a point of concern in the autumn of 1962. Joan Hymans, an executive committee member, was uneasy that 'the Executive Committee had a larger number of S. African members than British members'.[55] At the next meeting of the national committee she asserted that 'the Executive Committee ought not to have a larger number of S. African members than British members if this was supposed to be a British organisation designed to appeal to the British public'.[56] It was subsequently decided that they would make more of an effort to ensure that the executive maintained at least a majority of Britons, but that they would attempt to do this in an organic rather than arbitrary way, not removing sitting South African members, but ensuring that anyone who was added to the executive was British in origin. In 1965 it was determined that a member of the PAC could not sit on the executive because the AAM was 'a British movement and we had to reflect a British position', rather than the political situation in South Africa.[57] Later that year it was again pointed out that eight of twenty-five individual members of the AAM national committee were South Africans and it was once again agreed that when co-opting members they should do so to 'increase the British representation on the National Committee'.[58]

The extent to which they were a British or a South African organisation plagued AAM throughout its first few years. This affected the organisation both in terms of its membership, but also the focus of their appeals for financial and other types of support. Throughout the 1960s the finances of the AAM were often problematic. In 1962 there was a discussion within the executive committee about where they could find additional funds for the organisation. It was suggested by the treasurer that they ask the African National Congress, the Pan African Congress, the South African Indian Congress and the South West African National Union for financial assistance. However, three members of the executive committee – Martin Ennals, Sonia Clements and Joan Hymans – objected to this notion, saying that it 'would be immoral'.[59] Unfortunately, their reasoning for this statement was never clarified. One possible reason is that they were concerned that it would make the AAM beholden to these organisations or appear more South African than British. Of course, they could have simply believed that a group in the rich north should not be begging these struggling, recently banned groups in the poorer south for funds. Whatever their concerns,

they did not extend to appealing to South African students in Britain for funds. At the same meeting where it was deemed 'immoral' to seek financial assistance from political groups in South and Southern Africa, the finance committee of the AAM set out to look into the best way to appeal for funds to South African students studying in the UK.[60] Individual South Africans were also often the key focus of fundraising events. In 1965 a funding drive was particularly engaged in 'getting bankers orders signed by S. Africans'.[61] South Africans were also a specific focus of membership drives like that in 1965 which focused in particular on 'approaches being made to African student organisations'.[62]

The NUS did not rely on historical precedence to claim a place for themselves within British society. Yet they did have a public image problem which worsened over the course of the decade. They wanted to show that students were hard-working, respectable and law-abiding, which contradicted the critical view of students in the press and public.[63] The public concerns about students changed throughout this period and so did the students' response. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the public image that the NUS was most concerned about combating was that of students as a privileged, irresponsible and lazy minority. At their April 1958 council meeting it was suggested by a delegate from the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine that the NUS should not 'press [a] long-term policy of full vacation maintenance' as this 'would only give ammunition to those who are opposed giving students money on the grounds that they would not use it responsibly'.[64] The financial welfare of students was seen, by this delegate at least, as less important than the image of students as a whole. Showing that students were responsible was an uphill battle for the NUS throughout the decade. Students were often in the press behaving in irresponsible ways. In 1958 NUS was concerned when, during rag week, students in Liverpool disrupted a performance by Tommy Steele. At the following NUS council Liverpool students were censured for this behaviour. While the council recognised the importance of rag for charity collecting, it was resolved unanimously that 'students have a duty to conduct themselves in a sensible and reasonable manner in relation to members of the public' and all NUS members were urged 'to endeavour to ensure that the interests and reputation of students generally are not damaged by the irresponsibility of a few'.[65] Rags had been an issue for the NUS for a number of years, but the extent to which student 'antics' during rag weeks were publicly tolerated appeared to be diminishing.[66] This continued to be an issue through the middle of the 1960s. Amidst prolonged applause at

the November 1966 NUS conference, a member of the executive argued that students were responsible, saying that

> for every case the Press could bring forward, of a student driving a steam engine up Whitehall, NUS could bring forward a hundred students who were spending their spare time organising activities for their fellow students; going out helping to teach English to immigrants; serving abroad on GSO [Graduate Service Overseas] or similar project; helping to collect money for War on Want and Freedom from Hunger. The rights they demanded they felt they were paying for in carrying out those responsibilities.[67]

The president supported this notion, saying that students were willing 'to sacrifice personal comfort' and only complained when 'standards of education and the educational value of college life were . . . severely disrupted . . . And if money and talent were being wasted'.[68] This view of students as upstanding, perhaps the best part of British society, was clearly influenced by their desire to win over the support of those in power. Through the middle of the decade, the NUS also had to counter an image of students in Britain as radical and irresponsible, which was being created by alternative groups like the Radical Student Alliance, which broke away from the NUS in 1965, and perpetuated in the print media.

One of the arguments that the NUS made to offset this public concern about students was to try and bolster the importance of education and students in creating an economically and politically strong post-imperial Britain. In 1958 the NUS rewrote its policies on grants and welfare and were keen to argue that student grants were important to the entire society because of 'the national importance of higher education'.[69] A uniform and generous national grants system was needed, they argued, 'if Britain was not to lose her competitive position in the world markets'.[70] Students were thus, according to the NUS, vital to the maintenance of Britain's international position. The NUS's discussion of the importance of students and education for Britain and their central place in British society was, at least partly, self-serving. If education was accepted as vital to British society and Britain's place in the world, then it followed that the best and brightest students, regardless of their economic background, should be encouraged to study, which would strengthen the NUS's position. Valuing education in turn suggested that there should be 'equal opportunity to everyone to obtain higher education', which in turn meant that some form of student grant was necessary.[71]

In the early 1970s the position of students within British society was under attack. The NUS continued to maintain that students were a crucial and integral part of British society. However, they were aware of the increasingly negative attitude towards students from the media, general public and the new Conservative government with Margaret Thatcher as Minister for Education. In the light of 1968 and 1969, when it was widely reported that students in the Western world were 'revolting', many governments attempted to reign in students and youth and limit their power to demonstrate.[72] In April 1971 the 'Government's announced review of the membership and financing of unions' was seen by the NUS to be 'the most serious and central threat ever to face the NUS and its constituent unions'. The NUS perceived this as an attempt to smash the 'NUS and the student's movement'.[73] For the NUS attacking their financing was a clear attempt by the new government to limit their ability to protest. It was also an attack on their view of students, and student bodies, as central to British society. This coincided with the changing of the NUS constitution in 1969, allowing them to debate political matters. This new vision of the role of students saw them as 'relevant to society as a whole' and having an essential role to play in ensuring that society continued down a progressive and increasingly egalitarian and enlightened path.[74]

The placement of civil rights activists within British society was highly problematic. The location of Northern Ireland itself within the United Kingdom is contested and the subject of extensive and long-standing debate and physical violence. In fact it was the attitude towards the relationship between Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom which set the civil rights movement apart from previous campaigns led by Catholics in Northern Ireland.[75] The civil rights movement was not a traditional Republican movement which sought to unite all 32 counties of Ireland. While it is true that this was the long-term objective of many members and supporters of the civil rights movement, the organisations and campaigns themselves focused only on the inequalities being suffered by the Catholic community. The assessment of the civil rights movement in this book focuses on the stated aims of the movement rather than trying to attribute or assume unspoken objectives. Northern Ireland's complicated history and present made it quite difficult for civil rights activists to position themselves within British society in a way that would enable them to attract the interest and support of many people in England. But each civil rights group recognised that they needed to appeal to the UK government in Westminster rather than the Northern Irish government at Stormont if they were going to

make any real progress. This was both because Westminster was where the real power rested, and because they expected to get a fairer hearing outside of Northern Ireland. It was therefore crucial that they were seen to be an integral part of the UK regardless of whether or not the activists felt themselves to be 'British' or 'Irish'. The tactics of the civil rights movement located it as a British movement fighting for 'British' rights for 'British citizens'.[76] Civil rights activists in Northern Ireland worked to show the British government that dealing with the ongoing inequalities in Northern Ireland was in their best interest and could not be easily ignored. In 1968, for United Nations day, 24 October, PD hoped to illustrate this point. They took existing pamphlets about human rights and over-printed the phrase 'For Ulster Now' on the front and 'Britain can't sign the U.N. Charter on Human Rights because of Northern Ireland! Lobby your M.P.' on the back.[77] This statement worked to highlight the position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom and the impact of inequality in Northern Ireland on Britain's international reputation. Civil rights organisations continued to base their demands on the British citizenship of those in Northern Ireland regardless of the personal sense of national identity of their membership.[78]

The claim of 'Britishness' on the part of civil rights activists was subversive on several levels. First, it contradicted the traditional Republican claims that the Catholic community was Irish, not British. Second, civil rights groups had to compete with those in power, and the Unionist community more generally, for ownership of this identity. It was not lost on civil rights activists themselves that claims to be 'British' had always come from the Unionist community who many saw as 'in competition' with the civil rights movement. Betty Sinclair, the first chairman of NICRA, argued that the 'Unionist upper clique' claimed to be 'democrats and good Britishers' even though they were working against democracy.[79] She argued that this 'Unionist upper clique' articulated well what it was to be British – she identified the values of democracy, openness, concern for minorities and the well-being of all people – but that they were failing to live up to this British ideal.[80] To Sinclair, at least, being 'British' was a positive thing associated with all of the values that the civil rights movement itself embraced. It was, therefore, the civil rights movement, rather than the Unionist Stormont regime, which lived up to British ideals more than those who usually and vocally claimed 'Britishness'.[81]

Despite their claims for 'British' rights, it is clear that many members of the civil rights movement saw themselves and Northern Ireland generally as outsiders within the UK. Patricia McCluskey of the CSJ clearly

pinned her hopes for change on 'pressure from the Labour Government in Britain', by which she meant England, as she had no interest or faith in the Northern Ireland Labour Party.[82] She saw the fate of those in Northern Ireland resting on 'socially-conscious Englishmen' and her faith in these people began to be seriously challenged in the late 1960s when Wilson did not establish equality and end sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland.[83] In 1968 at the first major civil rights march between Dungannon and Coalisland, before the infamous march in Derry later that year, a statement was prepared to start the march which began 'to our fellow-countrymen, to the people of Britain and to all democratic government everywhere'.[84] While this statement was not read out at the march it does illustrate a worldview in which the 'people of Britain' were 'out there', separate and differentiated from their fellow countrymen.

Not all activists working for civil rights in Northern Ireland were in the province. The Campaign for Democracy in Ulster (CDU) was based in England. They had been set up in 1965 to support NICR groups by raising Northern Irish issues within the English media and at Westminster. The CDU worked particularly closely with the CSJ and later NICRA. The CDU argued that people in Northern Ireland 'should have the same civil rights as the people in the rest of the United Kingdom'.[85] They worked to try and normalise the relationship between Northern Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland arguing that the people in each region were no different and should be treated equally. One of the original aims of the organisation was to bring the electoral law of Northern Ireland 'into line with the rest of the United Kingdom'.[86] While the border remained an issue for many people in Northern Ireland and their supporters in the rest of the UK, the drive of the civil rights movement was to obtain equality, fairness and justice across the UK 'in the meantime'.

The difficulty for activists in Northern Ireland of carving out a place for themselves within British society became increasingly problematic in the late 1960s and early 1970s as violence returned to Northern Ireland. When the 'Troubles' heated up and the demands of the civil rights movement were drowned out, reporting about Northern Ireland was simplified to sectarian, un-thinking and barbaric violence between communities with little or no analysis.[87] In 1970 the CDU continued to remind its supporters that they had 'always claimed that we are concerned only with obtaining full British democratic standards for the people of Northern Ireland, to which they are entitled as British subjects'.[88] Yet they feared that the violence taking place in Northern Ireland was 'squandering . . . the good will of the great mass of the British

people for civil rights in Northern Ireland'.[89] With the reintroduction of internment in 1971 it became even more crucial for supporters of civil rights in Northern Ireland to show that those interned were British citizens and entitled to the same treatment as any other British citizen. The CDU argued that

> what is happening today at Long Kesh and Armagh could happen tomorrow in Durham, Glasgow or Manchester, against Socialists, or Trade Unionists who in a time of stress (mass unemployment, general strike, denial of civil rights, etc.) would have the audacity to stand up to the ruling class.

NICR activists clearly connected themselves to aspects of the British radical tradition in a similar way to CND as discussed earlier. It was clear to the CDU that those being held and tortured in Northern Ireland needed to be remembered as 'Her Majesty's subjects and citizens of the United Kingdom'.[90] It was this identity as British that, according to the CDU, should have protected them from such treatment.

Each of these organisations had critics who wanted to see them discredited. CND's opponents tried to argue that they were 'traitors' or subversives aligned with communism. In reaction, CND argued that they were the newest form of a long-standing tradition of dissent within British politics that went back to the Chartists and beyond. Critics of the AAM argued that the group should be ignored because they were 'foreigners'. The AAM thus spent a great deal of time and energy proving their identity as a British organisation. The NUS was caught up in larger criticisms of students and 'youth' as irresponsible. They, in turn, tried to prove just how responsible they were, distancing themselves from students who broke their strictures. The civil rights movement in Northern Ireland, like the province more generally, were simply ignored or dismissed as part of an intractable and mystifying religious battle that was taking place 'over there' in Ireland. NICR movement activists fought hard to remind both people and politicians in Northern Ireland that they were as much a part of the UK as any other area and should be treated as such.

Conclusion

The claims that these organisations made about Britain's place in the world, which were examined in the first part of this book, were all underpinned by their legitimacy as British organisations. Who they were, their

membership and leadership, was crucial in defining them as British and defining their position within British society. Only as integral parts of British society were they able to make the demands that we saw in the first part of this book. But as we have seen this legitimacy was sometimes the subject of uncertainty or attack. Each of these groups felt that their identity as British was the subject of scrutiny, but they each also thought it important to defend their centrality to British society. Locating themselves clearly within British society was not only crucial in giving their international demands legitimacy, but it also allowed them to criticise British society and propose ways to create their ideal, modern, progressive post-imperial British society. Before we explore their attempts to create this 'ideal' British society, we first turn to examine how these organisations understood their fellow Britons. They needed to enlist the support of the British people in order to create their ideal society but they often struggled to connect with 'the people'. This was largely because of the way they conceptualised the British people, the subject of the next chapter.

5
Views of the British People

In the last chapter we saw how CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement imagined themselves and their place within British society. But equally important to their self-perception was their understanding of their audience and potential supporters, the British people. We saw that each of these organisations was made up of a number of internal contradictions and discrete sections in competition with each other. Similarly the 'British people' were also not uniform or homogenous and the attitudes of these organisations towards 'the people' were equally conflictual and contradictory. Since the 1960s there has been a drive within history to tell the story of 'the people' rather than traditional work which has tended to focus on those in power.[1] This distinction between 'the people' and those in power was certainly understood by these organisations. When governments failed to act, or did not support their aims, they turned to 'the people' to provide support and backing and to amplify the concerns and demands that they raised. The expectation, therefore, was often that 'the people' would support them.[2] There was a belief within these organisations that 'the people' were like them. They had the same worries and, given the correct information, would support the actions and activities of these organisations. When this expected support failed to materialise, or failed to materialise on the scale that was wished for, each of these groups questioned both their view of the British public and their reliance on them.

As we saw in the previous chapter, some of these groups, particularly CND and the NICR movement, relied on historical precedence to claim their centrality within British society. Yet, CND also tried to position themselves as a 'new' type of organisation, along with the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement. This apparent 'newness' and their identities as progressive organisations was at odds with their views of the

British people, which were, in the main, traditional tropes, many of which were popularised during the Second World War but long proceeded it. While the international position of post-imperial Britain that they advocated was progressive, the attitudes, values and characteristics that they advocated for British people were conservative, traditional, nostalgic and backward-looking. Although these organisations have often been seen as the embodiment of changes in values, none of these organisations encouraged a new value system. Instead they wanted people to return to a, perhaps mythic, time when morality, care for their fellow human, Christianity and doing the 'right thing' mattered more than material things. Just as men on the political right like Powell were remembering an imperial past that may never have existed, the left in these groups imagined a British public of the past which may never have existed.

Who Are 'Ordinary' Britons?

The first wave of activity of the CND and AAM coincided with the popular and political argument that Britain was becoming classless due to rising living standards, affluence and the welfare state. There was a real contemporary belief, or concern, that class divisions were disappearing. In the wake of the 1959 election the Labour Party were concerned that their traditional methods of appealing to people of a particular class no longer worked and that, therefore, their traditional working-class voter base was being eroded.[3] This concern was not as acute for CND, the AAM, the NUS or NICR movement as they did not rely upon voters. However, changing ideas about class and what defined class culture certainly impacted on CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement and their understanding of themselves, their audience, their membership and their potential membership. In fact, these groups, particularly CND, felt as uneasy about changes in class identity as did the Labour Party. Many of the traditions within the Labour Party, the radical and Fabian legacy of some members, were also present in CND and the AAM. In this section we will explore first how CND and the AAM understood Britons as 'ordinary', before moving on to examine the unease that CND and the AAM displayed about the way that the modern affluent, consumer culture was impacting on traditional notions of class and class culture in Britain.

From early on CND appealed to potential supporters based on the 'ordinariness' of campaigners. The importance of 'ordinary' British people had certainly been voiced before the war. Populist ideals in the

nineteenth century relied on the potential of the 'masses' of 'common people'.[4] The interwar years have also been characterised as the period in which a more 'ordinary' or inward-looking national idea began to emerge.[5] During the Second World War the importance of the 'ordinary' British person was accentuated by the need to emphasise the 'sameness' of people's everyday lives to promote unity and uphold morale.[6] J.B. Priestley, in particular, took up this language. He wrote and spoke extensively about England during the war, emphasising the 'ordinariness' of the British people and placing himself amongst the 'ordinary' people in opposition to 'the official and important personages'.[7] This language was taken up by CND, who pinned their hopes on 'ordinary' British people. In the first edition of the newspaper *Sanity*, members referred to themselves twice as 'ordinary people' – once in relation to that year's Aldermaston March and again within the text of a letter sent by the group to the UN general secretary.[8] Not only were they hoping to appeal to people who would consider themselves 'ordinary' Britons, but they were also trying to identify themselves with the people and against those in authority. Arguably, this made them deeply 'unordinary'. As Michael Randle, a founder of the DAC and CND supporter said in 1963, what characterised CND supporters was that 'they question or reject many of the assumptions of conventional politics, and they resist "bloc thinking" ', which can be seen as the opposite of being one of the majority of 'ordinary' people.[9] Despite this, descriptions of CND supporters as 'ordinary British people' continued to be made at the end of the decade.[10]

The appeals CND made to 'ordinary' Britons also had important class dimensions. In highlighting their own 'ordinariness' CND was trying to get away from their image as 'middle-class radicals' and broaden their support amongst the working class.[11] In 1960 it seemed like CND had made a breakthrough within the trade unions as many of them were won over to CND's position and forced a motion supporting unilateralism through the Labour Party Conference that year.[12] However, as this support was reversed the following year it appeared that CND had not really succeeded in converting the majority of the working class, but only a few influential leaders who may have been more pragmatic and less committed anti-bomb campaigners.[13] There were constant calls within CND to increase trade union infiltration and participation. There was also consistent concern that this had not happened and some bafflement about how to appeal to trade unions.[14] CND continued to assume that the working class, like everyone else, were CND supporters in waiting, just needing to be educated to the perils of

nuclear war to get behind the movement. CND believed that the ability to learn and act rationally was shared by all British people. CND saw its role as educative, providing information that was otherwise being kept from people. CND continued to use familiar portrayals of British people.

Peggy Duff argued that the CND leadership too was traditionally British. She described them as 'conservative and rather naïve', which she characterised as 'very British'.[15] Duff's view of the British people did not change much during the 1960s. At the end of the decade, in a review of Bertrand Russell's autobiography, she argued that his reputation was 'so much greater abroad than in Britain' because 'the British are a very conservative people' and did not tolerate 'idiosyncrasies' like those exhibited by Russell.[16] While Duff found the British people, including the CND leadership, 'conservative', this label could equally be applied to CND's attitude towards them. CND's descriptions of British people relied on well-established, backward-looking ideas that fit within wartime tropes. They saw the British people as hard-working, willing to sacrifice bodily comfort and reliable, even in the face of a hard slog.[17] Allusions to these characteristics were made in many stories published in *Sanity*, including one in July 1962 which discussed the work of local members who transformed a bombed site near Kings Cross into a children's playground.[18] The forbearance of the British people was repeatedly highlighted in descriptions of the annual Aldermaston March. It was taken to be normal that the weather on the Easter weekend would be dreadful. The 1961 march in particular saw 'torrential rain on all four days', but in spite of this 'the numbers continued to increase'.[19] The British people not only showed their commitment to the cause of nuclear disarmament, but their hardiness and ability to overcome. In March 1972 *Sanity* published a piece remembering what it had been like to participate in the first Aldermaston March. It was a deeply moving occasion, the unnamed author remembered, as they marched towards Aldermaston and 'saw women on the pavements weeping as the column, mainly of young people, strode by'.[20] The moral conviction and dedication of these marchers were recognised by onlookers at the time and was used to try and inspire the next generation of marchers. The 1972 march was also compared to that of 1958. The spirit of the Easter march that year, it was said, 'seemed to harken back to that of earlier Aldermastons'. It was the spirit of 'easy comradeship', the belief in their own reasonableness and 'of course the same hardships and hard floors'.[21] Another march later in the year again demonstrated the hardiness of CND supporters. A new generation of young walkers once again

'persevered through thunder showers' showing their 'determination and enthusiasm throughout a difficult day'.[22] The 'ordinary' British people, therefore, were clearly determined, hard-working and selfless.

This characterisation carried on into the 1970s. In early 1970 CND continued to appeal to the British values that Bertrand Russell exhibited such as 'never giv[ing] way to despair'. British people, especially supporters of CND, the leadership believed, were 'rational creatures' and it was up to them to step back from the brink of disaster.[23] In 1971 Dick Nettleton, the general secretary of CND, described the work of CND supporters as 'stand[ing] on draughty street corners giving out leaflets . . . [and] trudg[ing] from door to door in the rain'.[24] This was the unpleasant, damp and uncomfortable work that CND supporters had long been expected to do. The British were also described by Tony McCarthy in 1971 as 'a stroppy race' who would not put up with poor decisions from their political leaders.[25] CND supporters were not just rational, but also sane and civilised. This was particularly evidenced in their opposition to the Vietnam War, which allowed CND to demonstrate that wars could be stopped 'because sane men and women refuse to support or participate in any such reversion to futile barbarism'.[26]

Yet by 1972, CND was becoming uneasy with the mass of the British public and unsure about their methods of reaching the public. Even, it was argued, if they worked 'with other pressure groups, hold conferences, rallies, marches . . . you don't reach the great mass of (non-political) people'. The suggestion now was to try a new tactic – to try and catch people shopping, as 'shopping must easily top football and TV combined as Britain's most popular weekend pastime, not to mention the rest of the week!'[27] While CND's view of those who supported them, the hard-working, determined Britons, with fortitude, had not really changed over 14 years, their view of the rest of the British population, particularly the working class, definitely had. From being a mass of well-meaning people who simply needed to be educated about nuclear weapons, they were now a consuming public, more interested in TV, football and shopping than being politically active. Rather than simply providing information to interested and concerned people, CND now saw their job as 'tricking' people into being educated about the perils of nuclear weapons.

The AAM's view of British people was somewhat contradictory. The two most important ways in which the AAM appealed to the British people were as consumers and Christians, two identities which rarely work to reinforce one another. We will explore the importance of Christianity

in the next section, but first look at the importance of consumerism to the AAM understanding of the British public. The reliance of the AAM on the mechanism of boycott shows their belief in the power of the British consumer. The boycott focused on foodstuffs rather than larger items. However, its focus on luxury or non-essential food items meant that it was engaged with the newly affluent British shopper. In the spring and summer of 1960 the main AAM work was centred around a pledge campaign – asking people to pledge not to buy South African goods. They sent out thousands of leaflets which contained two sections. The first asked for a donation to the work of the AAM and the second asked that people make a personal pledge about their shopping habits. By the end of June they had received back over 3000 of these leaflets with people signing to support the movement. Of these, however, only 300 had pledged to support the boycott. The national council discussed possible reasons why people would not undertake the pledge and thought that it 'might be accounted for by South Africans who would have to buy S.A. goods on return to the Union and mothers who felt that they must buy oranges for their children regardless of the country of origin'.[28] This last assumption illustrates a variety of AAM assumptions about the British public. First, they are primarily concerned with family and a family in which the wife and mother does the shopping. Second, the assumption that it would be oranges, an item which a few short years ago had been beyond the reach of the majority of working-class people except on special occasions like Christmas, that would sway these mothers suggests that it is the middle or the newly affluent working class that the AAM thinks will respond to their calls. Finally, it seems to paint a fairly bleak picture of British altruism with the desire for luxury goods trumping the fundamental human rights of people far away. Yet, the AAM never suggested that people do not fundamentally care about South Africa and instead gave them a seemingly plausible reason for refusing to undertake the pledge.

'Ordinary' Britons were both the key potential supporters that these organisations identified and highly problematic. The term 'ordinary' Britons slipped uneasily between references to the middle or working class. In the late 1950s and early 1960s CND and the AAM treated 'ordinary' people like they were a safe and known quantity. This comfort was destabilised over the course of the 1960s and by the end of the decade 'ordinary' Britons were seen as indecipherable and unknowable. They no longer conformed to the expectations that CND or the AAM had for them. This uncertainty was tinged with fear, but, in the main, both CND and the AAM remained hopeful about the British people. Even if they

were straying from their true nature, they could be taught the way back to the correct modern, moral and post-imperial path.

Christianity and Morality

It has long been argued that secularisation and industrialisation went hand in hand and that, therefore, Christianity in Britain had been on a slow decline since at least the late eighteenth century. More recently Callum Brown has challenged this thesis and the revisionism which was optimistic about the rates of religiosity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain. Instead, Brown posits that secularisation in Britain was sudden and catastrophic, occurring in the 1960s, more precisely 1963, and was the result of the undermining of discursive Christianity, particularly among young women. Brown argues that 'in the 1960s, the institutional structures of cultural traditionalism started to crumble in Britain'.[29] Following from this analysis we could assume that Christianity no longer had a strong hold on people by the mid-1960s and would no longer be used by groups such as CND and the AAM in attempting to appeal to and attract potential supporters. But this was not the case. Both CND and the AAM continued to see themselves fundamentally as Christian organisations and to put forward a vision of their members and potential supporters as 'god-fearing', good and respectable, conforming with traditional views of Christianity. Brown argues that from the early 1960s the discursive or rhetorical function of Christianity was losing its potency. This was the key means by which Christianity shaped the way people viewed the world and helped to define identity and conceptions of morality, respectability and 'good' and 'evil'. We should therefore see a profound shift in the language and rhetorical constructions used by these organisations. We do, in fact, see a lessening of direct discussion of Christianity, but the values that it encouraged continued to be embraced with a similar level of force. It is also popularly assumed that it was Northern Ireland, or Ireland more generally, which was deeply religious in this period rather than England. If that were true we would expect to find that civil rights groups in Northern Ireland were much more deeply informed by religion than were CND or the AAM, but that does not conform to the evidence. While they were certainly informed by religion, civil rights groups in Northern Ireland made a concerted effort, and largely succeeded, to keep religion out of their debate. This was not the case within CND and the AAM who explicitly and repeatedly appealed to organised religious groups as well as to the rhetorical devices and constructions

used within Christianity. The homogenous and wide-ranging nature of Brown's assertions about secularisation therefore seems somewhat questionable. Even if the bulk of society was moving away from overt appeals to Christianity when forming their individual identities and attitude to society and morality, the values themselves were hardly changing and there were pockets, like CND, where these values continued to be strongly adhered to and still associated with Christianity.

To CND, the British people were united by their Christian morality. Canon Collins was a clergyman with a strong background in Christian charity activity. He saw the fight against nuclear weapons as 'a moral crusade rather than a battle in the political war'.[30] The CND leadership believed that by couching the debate about unilateralism in moral terms they had more legitimacy. The women's committee, for example 'always stressed that theirs was an emotional and moral response to nuclear weapons'.[31] It was not just women within the movement who argued for this type of response, but the women's committee put forward a feminine ideal which focused on their roles as mothers and 'lovers of life'.[32] The moral character of the movement became so widely known and accepted that over the years it was assumed that the nature of the issue itself demanded a moral response. In his 1989 sociological study of CND, John Mattausch argued that this is not true and that this early phase of CND work was moral in character 'because the CND supporters *made it moral*; CND was created, and the moral nature of the Campaign was not axiomatic'.[33] Throughout CND's literature the bomb is clearly depicted as amoral – it needed to be opposed simply because of this.

This morality, which was such an important backbone of the organisation, was a firmly Christian morality. There were a variety of Christian denominations within CND. The leadership tended to be members of the Church of England and rank and file support stemmed also from non-conformist sects. Yet, they co-existed easily and worked together to put forward an all-embracing Christian identity. One of the most active groups in the CND was always the Christian Group. They produced their own literature to supplement that of the rest of the Campaign and assisted and encouraged 'the Campaign in recruiting in the Churches'.[34] It was not just within the Christian group, however, that Christianity played an important role. Christian ideals pervaded the Campaign. At the 1962 annual conference a representative from Pembroke argued that CND was 'the greatest movement since the dawn of Christianity' and that surely 'Christ was the first unilateralist'.[35] The CND symbol itself is sometimes credited with Christian symbology as it is seen to be

a 'drooping cross'.[36] In a discussion of the format of *Sanity* in the summer of 1962 it was agreed that a larger paper would better fulfil 'the dual role of providing a forum for Campaign news and views and a vehicle for evangelism'.[37] This sort of language was also used in reference to the annual Aldermaston March. In the autumn of 1962 there was intense debate within the organisation about the continuation of the march and how it could be changed or improved. The main argument, championed by both the executive and liaison committees, was that the 1963 demonstration had to 'revive the pilgrimage spirit of the earlier marches'. This would be accomplished by trying to persuade those who marched in previous years to join the demonstration once again and by 'limiting the numbers of younger marchers who, possibly, come for the fun of it'.[38] It was agreed that 'we should go for quality rather than quantity', asking each marcher to 'pledge themselves to a pilgrimage rather than simply sign up as marchers'.[39] It was thought that this proscription was succeeding. In 1963 it was reported in *Sanity* that 'no marcher loses sight of the fact that this is first of all a demonstration of protest, and a pilgrimage'.[40] It was clear that the marchers themselves understood the significant Christian and pious nature of the Aldermaston March. But this dominance of Christianity within CND did not mean that other religions were excluded. In 1962 the Remembrance Day celebration was organised by the Christian Group as an 'Interdenominational Service in Trafalgar Square'.[41] This embracing of other religions, however, does not serve to undermine but to highlight the importance of Christianity for the movement. There was no question that the Christian religion was at the heart of what they did and who they were and it was on this basis that they reached out to build bridges with other religions, acknowledging their importance to other communities.

The AAM too strongly appealed to the Christianity of the British public to encourage them to support their cause. The support of church members was fundamental to the organisation. Yet, they felt that religious organisations should be targeted even more. In the autumn of 1960 the secretary suggested they 'get statements from prominent churchmen of all denominations' in an effort to bring religious organisations more into the anti-apartheid movement. It was agreed to try and bring them in through the existing pledge campaign but to accompany this with letters 'to some leading representatives of each denomination, stating that the Church should take a leading role in Anti-Apartheid activities, and if they will sign the Pledge this might stimulate activity amongst religious groups and gain support for the Campaign'.[42] Both the AAM and CND saw themselves, and the British people, as essentially

moral and this morality was largely based on their perceived Christian character.

Secular Morality

Brown has argued that in the 1960s discussion of morality was 'remoralised in discourse in a form completely divorced from religiosity and Christian ethics'.[43] The values and qualities that are prized by Christianity, responsibility and respectability, fair-mindedness and respect for authority, were all also prized by these groups. As we have just seen Christianity continued to play an important role in these organisations, but over the course of the 1960s these values were increasingly upheld without direct reference to Christianity. These values and characteristics were all identified as attributes of the British people and characteristics that make them a 'good' people. Through most of the decade this assessment of the British public – that they were, at bottom, 'good' and wanted to do what was right, they were responsible and law-abiding – informed each of these groups. However, alongside this belief in the decency of the British public, there was always some doubt or concern that they were not all 'good' people. Instead, it was feared that they were increasingly selfish and disinterested in the world around them. This final section explores arguments within these organisations about the extent to which the British people were 'good' or 'bad'.

CND, as we saw above, did often use Christian morality when describing the British public. But this was not always the case. They also made references to the British public as simply 'good' people who inherently did what was right. Early in 1963 *Sanity* admitted that 'no one joins CND looking for quick returns' but 'because they have to. Because they know it is right. Because it is better to light a candle than curse the darkness'.[44] Simply because CND was doing good work, work that needed to be done, they could therefore count on the British public to do what was right and help them. The morality of the British people, particularly those in politics, was tested in 1963 during the Profumo, affair which we will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.[45] CND was interested in part because Profumo had been Secretary of State for War at the time. But within the pages of *Sanity* it was also argued that the case raised the 'basic questions of the kind of politics we want and the relationship of moral values to politics'. It was this basically amoral approach to politics, they argued, in which personal values were not translated into political life, which led 'to a situation in which people who would never sanction personal violence are quite prepared to support defence policies

which hinge on a threat and physical readiness to annihilate millions'.[46] CND generally had a positive view of British people. A young supporter writing in *Sanity* in 1966 answered a question put to him about how their youth group managed to get along with each other. The answer was simple, he asserted, as 'no person is born with feelings of prejudice, bigotry and intolerance'.[47] They had not learned these attitudes and could, therefore, get along quite well. The key for Britain was to simply stop teaching young people these attitudes and they could be what they were naturally intended to be. The AAM highlighted the responsibility of Britons. They attributed some of their success to the support they received from the Labour Party, but were mindful that they had 'strong support from all sections of *responsible* opinion'.[48]

Each of these organisations advocated working outside of the normal political channels, but not outside the law. They each saw demonstrations and protests as not only their right, but their duty in a democratic society. The creation of the Committee of 100 as an organisation dedicated to civil disobedience challenged several notions of British values held by CND. CND was quick to distance itself from the implications of breaking democratically passed laws. Upon the announcement of the new Committee of 100 the London office of CND stated emphatically that they 'believe[d] in the common sense and democratic ways of the British people', although they did respect that some individuals felt 'bound by conscience to use illegal means and undergo imprisonment'.[49] They did not agree that a minority should be able to undermine the state, holding up the British ideals of representative democracy, majority rule and the rule of law. CND identified tolerance as an important British characteristic and it too was used to criticise the new Committee of 100. In a letter to the editor published in the *Times* it was questioned 'whether this most tolerant of nations will tolerate a minority forcing its will against a majority and a Government elected by a majority'.[50] When the Committee of 100 staged a mass sit-down in Trafalgar Square in September 1961, their goals were again questioned. In particular, it was argued that they challenged established ideas of who should decide government policy and the sanctity of the democratic system. The timing of the demonstration was also criticised as it took place on the commemoration day for the Battle of Britain. The nationalism and credibility of the Committee was interrogated and it was suggested that even Mrs Pankhurst, the symbol of strong and effective direct action, would not have wished to join an organisation which so flagrantly disregarded the sacrifice of its predecessors.[51]

The mixture of pessimism and optimism felt about British society was echoed in ideas about the British people themselves. CND was generally hopeful about the British public and pleased with the trends they saw. Local groups too were heartened by the empathy and concern they saw within the British public. Orpington CND noted these feelings with regard to Vietnam in particular saying that 'the people of Orpington, of Britain, and of the world, will have felt a sense of horror at the present indescribable sufferings of the people of Vietnam'.[52] Yet there were also times when both local and national CND groups were concerned that the British people did not care enough. Dick Nettleton acknowledged that the 'movement against the war in Vietnam is growing' but despaired that 'as yet, only a small proportion of the British people have taken any kind of action about Vietnam'.[53] He used this to show that CND still had a lot of work to do. Exeter CND was also concerned about the apathy they perceived in the British public. They made analogies with the Holocaust to bring home the severity of the situation. In their July *Bulletin* they reminded people that 'Six million Jews died, because the ordinary German people failed to challenge Hitler' and asked their followers, 'will civilisation die because ordinary good people now are failing to challenge and question the work of scientists and doctors in our Universities and at Porton?'[54] CND attributed some of this growing apathy to the new counter-cultures, particularly hippies who had an 'air of hopelessness'. At the end of the decade CND was concerned that young people, upon whose interest and energy they had relied, were not being 'successfully harnessed to specific objectives such as nuclear disarmament'.[55]

However, there were perhaps more deep-seated concerns that the public was not just apathetic but 'bad'. This concern was raised in 1963 in the pages of *Sanity*. CND had long been critical of the attitude of the British government which attempted to hold on to Britain's international power by holding on to nuclear weapons. But from 1963 they also began to criticise members of the British public who supported this view. The editors of *Sanity* identified this problematic group of 'the people' as 'those who write letters to the *Daily Telegraph*' and hold views such as that 'Britons are still, in a nice, decent kind of way, a master race'.[56] These people, and this supposed attitude, was treated with a great deal of disdain and entirely discounted by these organisations. However, as we will explore in more detail in Chapter 8, there was a growing realisation within these groups in the late 1960s that they may be out of step with the majority of the British public on this issue.

The characteristics ascribed to Britons by Northern Irish activists were much less flattering than those held by CND. The CSJ did count on British people's sense of fair play.[57] Austin Currie, a Nationalist MP at Stormont and future civil rights activist, was, however, critical that so few people in England were aware of what was happening in Northern Ireland.[58] Patricia McCluskey was quite certain that 'the English, who are fair minded people, would be horrified if they knew how the minority [in Northern Ireland] . . . is treated'.[59] Yet, they were also critical of the 'indifference of the average Briton to what has been happening in Northern Ireland'.[60] Patricia McCluskey attributed the electoral success of the Tory Party through the late 1950s and early 1960s to the working classes. She warned Wilson that in England even 'the lowliest woman has been conditioned since birth to be something of a snob, she always has a weakness for some pomp and for your opponents' "ruling class" background', which would be one of the most serious problems he would have to tackle.[61] It was to the 'Christian forbearance' of people in England that Patricia McCluskey looked.[62] Patricia McCluskey was very proud to be Northern Irish when she congratulated the young people of PD who had participated in the January 1969 march between Belfast and Derry. She said that their 'heroism and bearing have added a new dimension to our considerable estimate of your qualities'.[63] While she did not agree with them on politics, their fortitude was something that she admired and could sympathise with. She and Conn both had much more critical things to say about English character. In a public letter issued the summer of 1969 they told their supporters that they had launched the CSJ counting on the fact that the British 'sense of fair play (of which they had heard about for years!) would impel them to act'. They were sorely disappointed that this had not been the case.[64] To Conn McCluskey the lack of action showed the 'British people, for the hypocrites they are'.[65] Although Conn McCluskey still appealed to 'British common sense', this was only to be found in a very few people in England.[66] The same was true for Patricia McCluskey's view of Britons. She continued to call on 'all fair minded people in Great Britain' although she was now clear that this was not a majority of people in England. They appealed to 'all Irish and British people who are concerned with the implementation of human rights in Northern Ireland to support Labour and Liberal candidates' in the 1970 election.[67] The election of the Conservatives, therefore, helped undermine the McCluskeys' faith in the British character.

What was also increasing in the early 1970s was the desire of civil rights activists in Northern Ireland to differentiate themselves and

the Irish people from the British. NICRA appealed to 'Irishmen and women living in Britain', separating them out from the 'ordinary British people'.[68] Within Republican groups, especially those individuals who were interned after 1971, there was a concerted effort to learn Irish culture, including Gaelic, a very clear way of differentiating themselves from other 'British' people.[69] This tendency was also visible in the CSJ, who referred to Protestants in Northern Ireland in 1972 as 'the Irish of British stock'.[70] One observer of the situation in Northern Ireland confirmed this growing rejection of all things British. In reaction to internment, Angela Gunn noted, people 'rejected everything that ever happened in Northern Ireland', including a 'very good health service and very good education', because of the attitude that 'nothing British was ever good'.[71] This is radically different from earlier in the decade when it was 'British rights' that were seen by the majority of civil rights organisations as the key to equality in the province. Even moderate leaders of the civil rights movement like Betty Sinclair now found it an 'ugly reality' that 'it is a British Act and a British Parliament that, de facto and de jure, rules in N. Ireland'.[72] This was a painful reality now rather than being the basis upon which civil rights could be achieved in Northern Ireland. In the aftermath of Bloody Sunday there was, unsurprisingly, a highly emotional response to the British in Northern Ireland. When students at Queen's University Belfast held a demonstration the day after the massacre, one of the chants used was, 'If you hate the British Army clap your hands'.[73] This was a radical departure for those who had only a few years earlier asked for the introduction of British troops, believing that it was their identity as British citizens that was the key to improving their lives, as was discussed in the last chapter. There was a clear sense of morality within each of these organisations. They believed themselves and their followers to be moral people. Throughout the 1960s the inherent morality of the British public began to be questioned within these groups, although an underlying hopefulness prevailed.

Moving Away from 'National' Identity towards a Global Citizenry?

At the end of the 1960s the character of British people continued to be discussed, but there was a growing sense that British people were not much different from people in other countries. While the left has often been more internationalist than other sections of the political spectrum, for these groups this was not necessarily the case. As Hinton has shown, peace movements have a long history of nationalism, which

certainly fits CND.[74] The AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement too tended to be more nationalist than internationalist in the 1960s, but were increasingly moving away from the idea that there was something unique about Britons which made them more easily converted to progressive, moral arguments. There was increased discussion of humanity rather than the British in particular. Early in 1969 Malcolm Caldwell, then chairman of CND, wrote a long piece in *Sanity* arguing against nuclear weapons based on a particular view of humanity. He argued that 'man simply cannot be trusted to have nuclear, chemical and biological weapons at his disposal' and for this reason alone they should oppose them. He thought it was expecting 'superhuman' qualities of leaders not to use these weapons if they were available. 'The bomb', he continued, was

> only one among a rapidly proliferating number of symptoms that Man has at some point along his historical road taken a wrong turning . . . therefore the most urgent task facing us as a species is to change direction and retrace our steps back from the brink.

This was visible in the 'social and cultural disintegration' in the developed parts of the world which we will discuss in more detail in the next chapter. In this situation the campaign against the bomb, he argued, was 'an integral part of the broader campaign against all the technological tyrants that increasingly warp our lives and blight our human-ness'.[75] This view of humanity, as fallible and easily corrupted, and the antipathy towards technology were certainly different from the hardy, incorruptible British people that CND had counted on in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Within the pages of *Sanity* in the early 1970s there was also a growing focus on humanity rather than Britons. This was partly because of the ever-growing international position CND saw for itself. Its audience was no longer Britain, but the entire world. However, their references to humanity were not always positive. CND needed to 'find the means to halt improvident, violent Man in his tracks before the ultimate catastrophe overtakes us'.[76] It was no longer just wicked governments or politicians who were responsible for the peril of nuclear weapons, but all of humanity. The unyielding optimism, and perhaps *naïveté*, of CND's early years had clearly taken a knock by the early 1970s.

Within the Northern Irish civil rights movement there was also a strain of this concern for humanity above any geographic particularities.[77] In PD this international sense was bolstered by an

awareness of events taking place in other states and drawing parallels between them and Northern Ireland. In October 1968 the Queen's University Belfast student newspaper remarked that, with the sit-down in Linenhall street which gave birth to PD, 'Student Power had come to Belfast'.[78] Similarly the CSJ drew parallels between the situations in Alabama, Algeria and Northern Ireland when it asserted that 'deeds not words are needed to correct social injustice in Northern Ireland'.[79] In 1969 copies of a 'Human Rights Covenant' petition were circulated around Northern Ireland, receiving at least 2139 signatures from people throughout the province from Derry to Belfast and many more from the Republic of Ireland. Although it is unclear whether these petitions were ever seen by someone in power, as they are available in the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland as part of Kevin Boyle's papers, they do indicate a strong commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the demand that it be implemented into United Kingdom law.[80]

Conclusion

At the beginning of the 1960s both CND and the AAM were confident that their cause would soon be taken up by a majority of Britons. 'Ordinary' British people, these organisation believed, only needed to be given the right kind of information and they would become supporters. Britain was still conceived as a Christian nation by CND, the AAM and parts of the NICR movement. They all saw their work as broadly in line with Christian teachings. All of these groups were broadly optimistic about the British people throughout the 1960s. Even when they were disappointed by the people they believed that change remained possible. Criticisms of the British people came to be increasingly heard within these groups by the end of the decade. These criticisms largely centred around a perceived 'apathy' or 'indifference'. Lack of progress was undermining the belief that all that was necessary to get the people to act to end Britain's nuclear weapons ownership, the apartheid system in South Africa or inequality in Northern Ireland was education. While each of these groups continued to believe that 'the people' were the key to success, there was a growing realisation that the structures in which 'the people' lived – namely British society itself –were in need of change. Each of these organisations had clear ideas about what was wrong with British society and what needed to happen in order to fix it, the subject to which we now turn.

6
Imagining an Ideal Britain

Writing in early 1964 Perry Anderson argued that 'British society is in the throes of a profound, pervasive but cryptic crisis, undramatic in appearance, but ubiquitous in its reverberations.'[1] Anderson was not alone in his assessment of a crisis pervading British society. He was responding to a spate of literature that had been published over the preceding approximately six years which bemoaned the 'decline' or 'stagnation' of Britain. Many authors have pointed to the 'state of the nation' literature, as Matthew Grant terms it, published most notably by Penguin in the late 1950s and early 1960s for creating a 'public mood' of criticism or 'declinism'.[2] But as Grant, and Paul Addison, have rightly pointed out, it is incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to discern a 'public mood'.[3] While the concentration of this literature certainly does tell us something about the attitudes and ideas of left-wing intellectuals at the time, the extent to which they represent or reflect a 'popular mood' is questionable. Bill Schwarz has also highlighted a sense of 'disorder' among the right wing in the late 1960s which he attributes to the 'end of empire at "home" '.[4] This chapter does not attempt to discern such a mood but instead explores how left-wing activists, many of whom were intellectuals to some degree, were responding to this sort of literature, the press coverage and public debate that it produced.

As we saw in the last two chapters, in placing themselves within British society and characterising their fellow Britons, CND, the AAM, the NUS and NICR movement could not help but assess British society itself. The assessments and critique of British society offered by these organisations engages with the ideas of 'declinism' which were circulating. While they are not preoccupied with economics like the majority of the 'state-of-the-nation' literature, they do show a critique of the

'establishment' both in their assessment of the government and the inequality that persists in British society. This chapter also argues that despite the claims within the 'state of the nation' literature to the contrary, this sense of crisis was a reaction to the end of empire.[5] Much of the 'state of the nation' literature argued that the end of empire was not the cause of the stagnation or decay. But this process of distancing from the empire, this denial, is part of the 'forgetting' of the empire that is crucial to understanding post-imperial British culture as was discussed in the first part of this book. In denying the importance of empire in producing the 'state of Britain' as it currently was, these authors, and many other social commentators on a variety of subjects, were trying to wipe the slate clean, to deny responsibility and eschew any sense of guilt for empire.

Bernard Porter has argued that a waning of the appeal of monarchy, which can be expanded to a lack of respect for hierarchies, is one of the repercussions of the end of empire.[6] This can certainly be seen throughout the critiques of British society offered by these three groups. Some of these groups show a lack of interest or respect for monarchy or hierarchy more generally, which, it could certainly be argued, was the result of longer trends or left-wing radicalism. But, what they also show is a growing disillusionment with elected power. Whereas 'state of the nation' literature is largely from the political left attacking the Conservative government of the early 1960s, CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement were critical of both the Conservative and Wilson's Labour government. It was, perhaps, their disillusionment with Wilson that was more profound and more troubling to these groups. Other scholars, for example Stuart Ward, argue that nostalgia, cynicism or satire were important cultural responses to the end of empire.[7] These organisations, however, do not exhibit this cynicism, satire or melancholy. Instead, the attitude put forward is very much a utopian one. They did not create other-worldly ideal fictions, but were working from a utopian impulse which demanded change, sometimes changes which they knew were impossible, and believed in the infinite ability of humanity to change and create a better world.[8] While the visions that these groups held for a better world and a better Britain were not often spelled out, their criticism of the current state of affairs always contained its own contradiction, which offered the possibility of perfection. This chapter explores the criticisms levelled by these groups against the British government and British society and the imagined ideal, or improved, post-imperial British society that these criticisms contained.

Criticisms of Government

For all of these organisations the goal in the late 1950s and early 1960s was to get a Labour government re-elected. CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement were all convinced that the best way to get Britain on a more moral path, eschewing nuclear weapons, taking a stand on apartheid and religious discrimination, valuing education and promoting equality and civil rights, was first to convince the Labour Party to support these policies and then get them elected. All of these organisations were highly critical of the policies of the Conservative governments of Macmillan and Home. Even after 1961 when the Labour Party had rejected the policy of unilateralism which they had supported only the year before, it was still widely believed within CND that a Labour government would be more sympathetic to their demands and they continued to work to convert individual Labour MPs to unilateralism.[9] But CNDs critique of government, and that of the AAM and NICR movement, was more wide-ranging and fundamental than simply critiquing individual policies. The NUS in this period had little to say directly about the government and government policies as this contravened their constitution. This section will, therefore, focus on the critiques of the government put forward mainly by CND, which were backed up by the AAM and NICR movement. The critique of the government put forward by these groups was fundamentally about a perceived lack of morality.

CND, particularly in the early 1960s, was a moderate and law-abiding organisation. As discussed in the last chapter CND split fundamentally with Bertrand Russell and his new Committee of 100 in 1961 because of their stance on direct action and law-breaking.[10] Collins and key CND activists thought that the best and only way of affecting real change was through government channels. CND believed strongly in the tenets of democracy, seeing that this was the fairest system of government. But they were also keen to remind supporters that democracy only worked if people were active and the government listened. *Sanity* warned its readers in October 1962, the same month as the Cuban Missile Crisis, that 'if Britain ever uses the bomb you will be far more responsible than the Germans were for the gas chambers, or than the Russians will be for the use of Russian bombs'.[11] Being part of a democracy had its advantages, but it also had its responsibilities. CND believed in the power of democracy and therefore set out to 'win the majority of the British people to its point of view'. If a revolution was needed, Collins argued, CND was not 'the organisation through which to effect a successful

revolution'.[12] But CND also held that the normal political channels of a constitutional democracy – in the main voting – were not enough and were not the only way in which people had their voices heard. CND valued the 'tradition of British dissent – the tradition that abolished the slave trade and forced the introduction of universal suffrage' and argued that it was CND itself which had revived this tradition and 'revitalised British politics by breaking through the stale drabness of the old political orthodoxies'.[13] The actions of CND and other extra-parliamentary movements of the radical left, CND believed, would keep British democracy in line, fulfilling the best hopes of activists now and in the past.

In the early 1960s, as we have seen, the clearest example for CND of the government lacking the necessary moral fibre was the Profumo affair. The Profumo scandal of the spring of 1963 rocked Macmillan's government and gave CND evidence of the lies being told by politicians. CND already saw politicians 'as a group of men who are not ashamed to lie their way into power'.[14] The Profumo scandal brought together many of the key issues of early 1960s Britain – perhaps most importantly the Cold War and the beginning of the 'permissive' moment.[15] But it can also be seen as a moment of disillusion with the political system and democratic leaders. Although CND was struggling in this period to maintain a clear single-issue identity, an issue to which we will return in Chapter 7, they did take a stand on the Profumo affair. CND had something to say about Profumo not just because he was the Minister of War, a position which they opposed on principle, but also 'because the whole affair has raised basic questions of the kind of politics we want and the relationship of moral values to politics'. CND thought that 'the sex issue' was of 'trifling importance', but that 'of much greater import was the issue of lying'. They saw this scandal as an indictment of the entire British political system as it showed that 'the use of lies and half-truths [was] an integral part of politics-as-they-are – irrespective of the party in power'. The real problem lay in the fact that this sort of politics could condone the use of nuclear weapons. CND argued that

> it is this basically amoral approach to politics, with the assumption that values which matter in personal life either need not be or cannot be followed through in public life, that leads to a situation in which people who would never sanction personal violence are quite prepared to support defence policies which hinge on a threat and a physical readiness to annihilate millions.

They saw in this scandal

> an appalling indictment of our priorities and our moral values that we reward complicity in genocide by appointing Mr. Profumo to the Queen's Privy Council, then disgrace him because he turns out to have shared a girl with a Russian a couple of years ago and has been stupid enough to lie about it!

It was therefore up to CND to 'expose the real immoralities and the real lies which are written into current politics'.[16] More specifically it was the role of the Youth Campaign of CND, without whom 'the youth of this country will be completely vulnerable to the lies of the statesmen, politicians and military strategists'.[17] Politicians were clearly failing to provide the moral leadership that British society needed and CND was very glad to see the election of the Labour Party the following year. This joy, however, did not last long.

After the Labour Party conference in 1961, when the party's support of unilateralism was repealed, CND changed their policy towards the Labour Party. No longer was Labour a simple or obvious choice for the organisation to support. CND now took a much more independent and critical political line. In the 1964 general election they told supporters to ask all candidates about nuclear weapons and support only those who were unilateralist regardless of their party affiliation.[18] But when Wilson was elected, CND, like the majority of the left, were filled with hope. It now seemed possible that something might change. The front cover of *Sanity* in the month after Wilson was elected contained an article about Labour, saying,

> Britain has gone with Labour. It has gone, moreover, with a Labour Party which laughed derisively at the Conservatives' declared intention to continue building an independent British deterrent which, said Mr Wilson, 'will not be independent, will not be British and will not deter'. So what can we expect from Labour on the bomb?[19]

The verdict was out on Labour but there was a clear sense that Wilson himself offered some hope that Britain would abandon nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, this hope did not last long. Just two months later *Sanity* was reporting, 'HOW HAROLD WILSON (with the best of intention) TOOK THE WRONG TURNING' by inviting non-nuclear countries to join the Atlantic Nuclear Force.[20] In February 1965 Anthony Arblaster wrote about 'Harold Wilson's Hundred Days' in which he

argued that 'Labour has yet to prove its ability and integrity. We must therefore suspend judgement'.[21] CND was trying to exert an intense pressure on Wilson to follow their line, but perhaps even more importantly, to show his moral fibre.

Despite their continued hope in Wilson, CND was also holding their breath waiting for Wilson to disappoint. And disappoint he did. In March 1965 *Sanity* sent a 'warning to Mr. Wilson' about his support for the American war in Vietnam. They argued that 'Mr. Wilson's Government has not had the courage to make any radical break with the policies of its predecessor' and that his failure to honour his pledges about defence would cost him votes, and possibly the next election.[22] Throughout 1965 there was comment about Wilson in almost every edition of *Sanity*. The criticisms that most often recurred were about Wilson and the Labour government's support of America.[23] In April, when Wilson had been in office six months, it was clear that he was not moving quickly enough for CND. In an article in *Sanity* CND reported that they had hoped to see the beginning of Wilson's promised 'New Britain' laid within his first six months, but 'instead, the New Britain seems as far away as it ever was . . . [as] Labour's record on defence has been an immense disappointment'.[24] Again in July CND voiced their 'disappointment' in Harold Wilson. While they did not 'doubt his sincerity', they did 'regret that his eyes see only stars and stripes'.[25] CND also criticised Wilson for caring more about his appearance, both as a 'national-leader' and a 'forward-looking and peace-loving statesman', than about doing what was 'right'.[26] He was seen to have his priorities wrong, and even worse, for those who hoped that he would be a moral leader, to be vain. These criticisms were raised less frequently within *Sanity* in 1966 and diminished after Wilson was re-elected with a greater majority in March 1966. Thereafter CND's sense of disappointment in Wilson did not wane but the palpable shock that his actions were those of a Labour government did decrease. Wilson was still seen to have betrayed the British people by not fulfilling his promises, but CND, at least, had stopped expecting differently.[27] By the end of the decade CND rarely mentioned Wilson at all, but spoke only of the Labour Party or Labour government. Whereas in the middle of the decade Wilson himself seemed to be the root of hope about changing British policies about nuclear weapons, now it was the legacy of the Labour Party and their reputation which CND saw as the only thing valuable enough to try and hold onto.

For the AAM and the NICR movement too Wilson and his government were a disappointment. Both had hoped and expected that when

Labour returned to power in 1964 things would be different. The AAM had hoped that Wilson would take a firm line on South Africa. In 1965 they reminded supporters that

> when a Labour Government was elected a year ago not only broad sections of anti-racial opinion in this country but also the peoples of South Africa and the Afro-Asian world expected a considerable advance towards an enlightened British policy towards apartheid and the South African Verwoerd regime.[28]

While they were happy that he had announced an arms embargo on South Africa, this wider hope in Labour policies did not last long. Only a year into Wilson's premiership the AAM called the actions of Wilson's Labour government a 'severe disappointment' and said that all supporters of anti-apartheid work 'cannot but help feeling badly let down' by Wilson and his policies.[29] They, like CND, were sorely disappointed by what they perceived as Wilson's weakness. And this impression did not soften the following year. They found Wilson's policies towards Rhodesia a 'betrayal' and a sanctioning of white domination and apartheid.[30] The AAM even charged his government's policies with 'racialism', saying that they had 'pursued a course of the gravest danger to the peace of the world – a course which exacerbates the great racial divide'.[31] While they appreciated Wilson's assurance of maintaining the arms embargo against South Africa in 1968, they criticised his handling of the Rhodesian situation and general weakness in relation to apartheid.[32]

Within the NICR movement it was the CSJ and the McCluskeys who were most hopeful about the election of Wilson and the change that this would bring to Northern Ireland. Patricia McCluskey asserted that she and the rest of the CSJ believed 'enough in British Labour' to accept the promises made by Wilson to redress the wrongs in Northern Ireland.[33] Patricia McCluskey appealed directly to Wilson urging him to do something, as 'word from you [Wilson] would reverse the position [in Northern Ireland] overnight'.[34] Both Conn and Patricia McCluskey frequently wrote to Wilson. Patricia tried many tacks from chastising Wilson for his 'continued inaction' and telling him that his hypocrisy was 'resented in many quarters'[35] to complimenting him on what the Labour government had been doing.[36] The CSJ reminded Wilson in March 1967 that 'the restraint which Republicans are at present showing could not possibly last' and that should violence break out he would be held partly responsible because of the 'authority of your Government,

and also because of the promises you made'.[37] Patricia's letters became increasingly desperate and direct so that by July 1968 she was telling Wilson that 'we regard you as being wholly responsible for protecting the Roman Catholic minority in Northern Ireland'.[38] The increasing urgency and disappointment in these letters is palpable. It is clear that the McCluskeys and the CSJ hoped that Wilson personally would make a difference to the situation in Northern Ireland and, as the years progressed and this did not materialise, increasingly held him personally responsible for the situation there. His weakness, particularly his inability to stand up to the Unionist government, made the CSJ and the McCluskeys as disappointed in Wilson as CND and the AAM had become.

CND was critical of successive British governments throughout the 1960s. They clearly saw the Macmillan Conservative government as amoral, hiding information and lying to voters. Their initial hopes that Labour would support and then implement unilateralist policies were quickly dashed and their disillusionment with Wilson and his Labour government was profound. A window of hope had opened in the lead-up to the 1964 general election, but very quickly CND, the AAM and the McCluskeys were critical of Wilson for not living up to his election promises. Although it is not unique for extra-parliamentary groups to be critical of the government, the concerns of these groups were about their perception that the government, and Wilson specifically, had failed to provide moral leadership. The overall criticism was one of moral weakness, an inability to stand up to the Americans or the Stormont Government or to do what was right instead of what was popular. Their assessment, therefore, was that elected authorities were not going to change British society for the better. Who was going to fill this void was very much up in the air.

Equality and Inequality

At the end of the Second World War the Attlee government set about constructing the welfare system in order to prevent the hardships that Britons had faced during the 1930s. The state would look after people from the cradle to the grave. As a by-product, a happy by-product to many, class differences that had been so prevalent before the war would be narrowed if not eradicated.[39] The goal of a 'classless' society was one which the National Union of Students embraced wholeheartedly and they felt, unsurprisingly, that education was the key. The 1944 Butler Act was designed to give children from working-class backgrounds a 'ladder'

into higher education and ensure that the best and brightest were getting the best education, not just those who could afford it. This was the goal of the NUS, to help Britain fulfil its best liberal desires for fairness and equality through equality in education. Despite the anachronism of the deep class, gender and racial divisions within British society, the NUS identified the desire for fairness and equality as a key characteristic of the British psyche. CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement all firmly believed in the goal of equality and saw it as a key component of post-imperial Britishness. However, it was most clearly articulated by the NUS, who are the focus of this section. The NUS's goals of equality linked very well into much of the left-wing rhetoric about the end of empire. The NUS, following this line, supported the independence or liberation of former colonies. The end of the empire for them meant the realisation of a profound belief in human equality.

By the beginning of the 1960s it was becoming increasingly apparent that the equal society which had been heralded by the creation of the welfare state had not yet been fully realised. But, for these organisations, that certainly did not mean that the goal should be abandoned. The NUS subscribed to the ideals of both the 1944 Butler Act and the 1963 Robbins Report – that education should 'open the way to a more closely knit society' and that 'higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so'.[40] Through the 1960s the NUS upheld these ideals and berated the government for not following through on these plans. The NUS were primarily concerned that access to higher education be available to all regardless of their background, but they strongly believed that this would never be realised as long as there existed inequality in primary and secondary education.[41] Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s there was debate in government and society about comprehensive secondary education. The 1944 Butler Act set up three forms of secondary schools – grammar, technical and modern – which were designed to be different but equal. However, technical schools were never adequately funded and what developed was a system in which particularly able students who passed the 11+ exam went to grammar schools and on to university while the majority of students went to secondary modern schools and then into work at 16. The idea of 'comprehensive' secondary schools was to do away with this division, uniting the two types of schools, allowing all students to go to equally good schools and have equal chances of progressing to further education.[42]

For the NUS this also meant that there should be equality between institutes of higher education. In particular, they thought the

perpetuation of elitism at Oxford and Cambridge was unfair and needed to be tackled. In 1960 NUS council passed a resolution which 'deplore[d] the continued existence of closed undergraduate scholarships (i.e. those where selection is from among a restricted group of the students eligible for entrance) for British students to Oxford, Cambridge and other universities, and instructs its Executive . . . to work for their removal'.[43] Even within their own membership they sought to do away with what they perceived as unfair advantages and ensure that everyone had equal opportunities. One of the guiding principles of the NUS, as articulated by Mr Jenkins, a delegate from Manchester University in 1965, was 'the equality of man'. Jenkins, and others, believed that people could be educated to want equality.[44] And that was one of the reasons why the NUS thought education was so important in helping British society realise its desire for equality.

The re-election of Wilson in 1966 with a widened majority urged many people within the NUS to believe that he could now affect the changes that he had promised. And for the NUS this meant, first and foremost, prioritising education. As Geoff Martin, the president of the NUS, said to council in April 1966, 'if the Government was serious about building a new Britain then it must realise that one of the keys to this was education'. This, he argued, meant that they needed to 'instil in the public an awareness of the importance of education' and the NUS had an essential role to play in showing this importance. NUS policy was summed up as

> firstly, the break down of traditional barriers, not only at secondary level but higher education itself, for the Government was committed to a system which emphasised differences in status between universities and other colleges of higher education; secondly, a more modern, a more efficient, a more democratic system of higher education which involved all those most intimately concerned in its government. This meant teachers, parents, lecturers and students as well as dons, local education authorities and the Department of Education and Science, and, thirdly, a firm commitment to allocate a higher proportion of the national budget to education.[45]

The government, of course, had a key role to play in the re-prioritisation of education, but in order to create real equality so too did the NUS. Council gave the executive a list of priorities at the April 1966 meeting which highlighted this importance. These including opposing the

> solidification of the binary system of higher education by calling upon constituent members to set their own house in order by extending full reciprocal facilities to all other Unions . . . the abolition of the Means Test and the raising of the level of grants . . . the rejection of any form of loans in replacing or partially replacing grants . . . [and] the raising of teachers' salaries.

All of this would help 'students to constitute a more educationally conscious force in society'. They would be the vanguard of the informed that would show the rest of the British public the right way forward.[46]

For the NUS the grants system was fundamental to their objective of an equal society in which everyone had access to higher education. Grants would allow people who did not come from wealthy backgrounds to attend university. In November 1966 the NUS took up this issue with the Secretary of State for Education, Tony Crossland, who attended the NUS council meeting. The president of the NUS told Crossland directly that they set out to

> extend and improve the grant system . . . to root out waste of talent and money . . . continue to remind the Government that the binary system is educationally unsound in our view and we will impress upon him (the Minister) continually our belief in a fully comprehensive system of higher education.

The NUS would 'continue to inform the student body at large and in addition the general public of unfairness and discrimination where it exists'.[47] The NUS opposition to unfairness and discrimination in education came to the fore the following year when Crossland proposed increasing fees for overseas students. The NUS strongly opposed this policy which, they argued, showed that they were 'not an elitist organisation, a middle class, self-centred organisation'. They wanted to show the minister that 'his ideas are unworkable: that he is spoiling higher education by introducing discriminatory increases'.[48] The following year grants continued to be the issue through which the NUS voiced its objective of equality. The NUS once again reaffirmed their 'policy of equality of opportunity for all through a public system of student support' which was based on their belief 'that there is no hierarchy of students upon financial, academic, social or other basis and in consequence there should be a single grants policy adopted by the government covering all types of student and grants'.[49]

At the end of the 1960s the language used within the NUS to discuss equality was more clearly focused on working-class children. They argued that school leaving age needed to be raised not only because the gap between leaving school and entering a sixth form college 'particularly adversely affected students from low income families' and was 'direct economic wastage', but fundamentally because it 'was tantamount to discrimination against children of workingclass parents'.[50] Methods of selecting students for secondary school and higher education were also seen as 'discrimination against working class children'. The NUS saw the policies of the Conservative Party as 'accept[ing] discrimination as inevitable and good. Is this not', they asked, 'a flagrant disregard of the principle of equality of opportunity for all' for which the British people had worked so hard?[51] In order to promote equality, particularly equal opportunity and access to higher education for those from working-class backgrounds, the NUS was going to have to reach out to youth. Their constitutional changes at the end of the decade finally allowed this. They took on the Youth Service, an international programme, which they said 'implied paternalism' as it 'attempt[ed] to indoctrinate a middle-class ethos and set of values alien to those who attended youth clubs'. The time had come, the executive argued, to 'break down the barriers between students and other young people'.[52] At the end of the decade, then, the NUS saw it as their duty to 'lead youth' and get involved in social service.[53]

The NUS feared that if they were not concerned about the welfare of working-class youth then the very 'un-British' attitudes of discrimination and inequality would breed. In 1968 in the wake of Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech one delegate to NUS council argued that 'the main reason why dockers followed Powell was that workingclass children in Britain were as deprived as immigrants'. The delegate who gave this speech received a chorus of 'hooray' when he argued that 'at every point where "immigrants" [were] mentioned, they should add "workingclass" '.[54] With this recognition of the hardships and inequalities experienced by working-class children came a realisation that they, members of the NUS, were not at the same sort of disadvantage. The new president in 1969, Jack Straw, reminded delegates that 'we are as students, whether we like it or not, a privileged elite'. Jack Straw, who went on to an illustrious political career in the Labour Party, was elected as the first NUS President under the new constitution, without Clause 3, which no longer required that the NUS only talk about student matters. Straw strongly advocated student involvement in the community, particularly in tackling the 'greater social wrong' of 'poverty, of educational

deprivation, of racial tension, of old age, of class barriers, [and] of slum housing'.[55] Despite widening their interest and remit, the NUS was still firmly focused on ensuring equality of access to higher education and attacking economic and social inequality. The NUS criticised government policies, seeing them 'as an attack on educational standards and a severe restriction of educational opportunity for all schoolchildren and students, especially those from a working-class background'. They demanded that the Government re-prioritise funding 'towards education' and away from 'defence expenditure'.[56] They also took on issues within the education system that were thought to promote inequality – namely 'streaming'. The NUS was concerned that ongoing 'streaming' in primary and secondary education was threatening 'comprehensivisation' by the 'maintaining of elite "grammar" or "A" streams within comprehensive schools'. This was particularly a problem because they believed that 'as a general principle streaming discriminates against children from poorer social and economic backgrounds', which was both morally wrong and decidedly against the British values of fairness and equality.[57]

After their change of constitution in 1969 the NUS set out to work much more closely with the local community and to try and tackle some of the problems of inequality. At the first council meeting of 1970 the new president, Trevor Fisk, set out the NUS 'vision for education in the 1970s', which included 'massive expansion of nursery education' so that 'children from deprived homes . . . [were] given a better start on the education ladder' as well as 'even greater resources . . . [for] primary schooling in the slum areas . . . [and] fair, open and egalitarian secondary schools'.[58] In order to really tackle problems of poverty and inequality, however, the NUS acknowledged that a change in society was really necessary. The creation of Student Community Action (SCA) was one of the main ways in which they set out to do this. The SCA was an organisation created by the NUS because they were 'deeply disturbed by the blatant social inequalities of our capitalist society' and particularly the 'lack of student consciousness about these problems'. Through the SCA, the NUS hoped, students would become more involved in the local community, more aware and concerned about the problems faced by British society and be able to give back to that community. This was based on a recognition that students were a privileged group who had 'too often in the past . . . been concerned only with the benefits that students will receive from the community'. Only by involving students in the NUS goal to 'bring about the fundamental changes necessary for the well being of our society' would 'the student world . . . regain its true

perspective'. If the NUS succeeded in helping 'students and young people gain a broader perspective of the problems of society', they could begin to 'aid the creation of a better society'. They were keen to say that they did not undertake these issues simply to 'change the student "image" ', as had been the concern of NUS leaders in the past, instead they wanted to make students 'aware of such problems as poverty, bad housing, racialism, the need for children's play areas, loneliness, addiction and alcoholism'. And with this knowledge, it was hoped, graduates would 'press for the formation of a genuinely egalitarian society when they leave college'.[59]

Once the NUS was constitutionally allowed to discuss British society it became a recurrent theme at NUS conferences. After many years of shying away from discussions about politics and the society in which they lived, the NUS now made statements at almost every meeting about how important education and students were for creating a progressive and powerful post-imperial Britain. They asserted that 'the educational system is indivisible from the general values and economic and political structures of society'.[60] What students were doing, according to Jack Straw, was 'challenging society to live not by their [students'] ideals but by society's own'. The NUS wanted Britain to live up to its own ideals of fairness and equality. Even when it seemed like students were being selfish, as was perceived to be the case over student grants, Straw argued that they were really 'fighting to preserve and extend the system which allows, at least in part, working-class children to go into higher education'.[61] And education, as has already been indicated, was 'the solution to the urgent national and world wide problems of inequality, resource distribution and hunger'. The first step towards this was the 'end to the binary system, and its replacement by a system of comprehensive institutions of higher education'.[62]

With the election of Edward Heath in 1970 and the Tory's rhetorical abandoning of comprehensives in favour of parental 'choice', the NUS concern about inequality in education gathered pace. At the NUS conference immediately following Heath's election NUS council 'condemn[ed] the high-handed attitude of the new Government to education in particular' and argued that 'the Tory concept of educational equality [was] one of "equality" and "freedom" for the middle classes alone'.[63] When questioned about what the NUS executive was doing to combat the binary system, the NUS president assured delegates that 'the iniquitous binary system was all-pervasive, and covered the totality of the Union's work'. Everything the NUS did, he argued, was at its core combatting the binary system and inequality in education.[64]

The NUS argued that 'all future development plans of higher education . . . [should be] drawn up in relation to community development' and that 'education institutions should be planned as public buildings and not isolated, elitist "ivory towers" '.[65] This was a reference to the new 'plate glass' universities that had been created in the wake of the Robbins report. These were largely situated on campuses away from city centres which, according to the NUS, made them seem more exclusive and cut off from ordinary British society.

By the early 1970s the NUS was trying to position itself as a trade union defending the rights of the working class as any other trade union would. This move followed student claims made around the world in 1968 that they were the 'new vanguard' of the revolutionary left.[66] In January 1972 they moved to join the Trades Union Council, but this never really got off the ground, in large part because the TUC itself was not particularly interested. But it does show the commitment of the NUS to the breakdown of class barriers, even if the means by which this was going to be accomplished were highly questionable.

Equality and fairness were seen by CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement as the fundamental aspects of an ideal post-imperial British society. Each group highlighted areas in which inequality was rife and was adamant that this needed to be rectified if Britain was going to move forward as a progressive, post-imperial power. This was especially the case for the NUS who saw unequal access to education, and hierarchies between educational institutions, as clear symptoms of a sick society. Education was the key to Britain's international prestige and equality within education was key to the creation of a fair and egalitarian society.

CND's Ambiguous Attitude to Modernity

The postwar period, particularly the decade of the 1960s, is not only seen as a period in which class disappeared as a meaningful social identity, but also when Britain became 'modern'.[67] Harold Wilson was elected in 1964 under the banner of creating a 'New Britain' that would harness the modern technologies to allow Britain to progress and surpass other nations. For the radical left this notion of modernity, particularly in its attachment to technology, was deeply troubling. Not only because technology was responsible for nuclear weapons, although this was certainly a significant part of the uneasiness exhibited by CND, but also because of many more ephemeral issues related to modernity such as individualism and a sense of degradation. Modernity has never sat

particularly easily with the left. As Meredith Veldman has demonstrated, CND fits into the legacy of anti-modernism, or anti-technology, sentiments across both the left and the right.[68] Machines, and modernity more generally, were associated with death and destruction, degradation and individualism. They were set up, by CND, as the binary opposite of humanity, life, creation and beauty.

For CND modernity and technology were intrinsically bound to the deterioration of the natural world and posed a threat to humanity both bodily and morally. The threat of nuclear weapons for human health was one area in which CND saw the threat of technology manifest. Canon Collins commented on the 'growing and deep concern on the part of many in Britain about the dangers of radio-active fall-out from the testing of nuclear weapons', which he thought was manifest in the work of CND.[69] CND had absorbed the National Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons Tests in 1958 and many of their supporters were concerned specifically about the impact of testing on human health and the environment. This was particularly evident when looking at CND support, as it dramatically trailed off in the aftermath of the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963. For many people who had supported CND in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they had accomplished what they set out to do in stopping atmospheric tests which sent radioactivity into the air.[70] However, CND argued that this treaty did not signal the end of the impact of radioactivity. In 1964 CND reminded the readers of its newspaper *Sanity* that people continued to die in Hiroshima and Nagasaki due to the lingering effects of radiation.[71] Two years later the effects of fallout once again came to the fore as China tested their third nuclear bomb. CND discussed the 'radio active dust clouds [that] were still floating across the world' and the threat that this would encourage other states to resume testing.[72] As in all of its campaigns, CND brought this threat of fallout back to Britain, paying particular attention to the impact of faraway tests on the UK. In 1967 CND held a demonstration outside the office of the Chinese chargé d'affaires in London when it was announced that the radioactive fallout from China's H-bomb had reached Britain.[73] *Sanity* asked its readers, 'what should be Britain's attitude as she receives from the other side of the world her latest dose of radioactivity?'[74] At the end of the 1960s concern about radioactive fallout was still being linked by CND specifically to human health. In September 1969 the front page of *Sanity* alerted readers that '375,000 babies are missing', and an article later in the same paper warned of 'the end of all children'.[75] At the end of the 1960s one of CND's key goals was to present 'new data about the effects of nuclear testing' to show

their supporters the impact that nuclear weapons continued to have on human health and the natural world.[76]

Some members of CND were also particularly concerned about the potential of nuclear weapons for despoiling nature. This mirrored traditional values of nineteenth-century conservationists and attitudes towards the British countryside as 'green and pleasant' land by focusing on nature as something 'beautiful' to be protected.[77] In the early 1960s the CND Constructive Service worked to help clear bomb sites and other vestiges of the last war in order to make places 'beautiful' and 'useful' once again.[78] Concern to preserve the natural beauty of the landscape was also voiced in concern about fallout which, it was feared, 'could transform our globe into an irradiated desert'.[79] In the spring of 1969 the siting of a radio base in East Anglia became a concern for CND because of the importance of the beauty of the natural environment. The subheading of the piece on this issue in *Sanity* was 'Beauty despoiled' and it highlighted a number of problems with the siting of the base in the village of Orfordness, including the 'heavy traffic [which] disorganises life', the 'intrusion into a coastal stretch' which had been designated 'an area of outstanding natural beauty' and the potential threat it caused to wildlife.[80] These concerns use the nostalgia for Britain as a green and pleasant land and glorify rural Britain, and show the growing concern for the impact not just of nuclear weapons but of the infrastructure associated with them upon the natural landscape.

In 1969 the new chairman of CND, Malcolm Caldwell, called the bomb 'the very symbol of everything that is wrong and sick in modern technological society' and saw it as the archetype of the 'squandering of nature's wealth'.[81] Caldwell saw the bomb as a threat to civilisation and survival alongside many other 'material threats', including 'the private motorcar, supersonic aircraft, DDT, oil slicks, hastily-marketed drugs, pesticides, [and] atmospheric pollution'. If the bomb was seen in this light, he argued, opposing it was 'part of the broader campaign against all the technological tyrants that increasingly warp our lives and blight our human-ness'. He advocated a retreat to 'voluntary simplicity', in the form of a 'back to the land' cry, in response to the 'emptiness, anxiety and terror of affluence'.[82] For Caldwell the 'nuclear age' had shown the 'true precariousness of [humanity's] tenure on earth' and he argued that the most significant development of the 1960s was the 'revolt against science', which he thought could be seen in the falling numbers of university students entering scientific or technological courses. Even the 'politically apathetic', he asserted, had 'stood up in their thousands to reject supersonic bangs, new airports, [and] inhuman

motorways'.[83] In his assessment of what CND needed to do at the beginning of the 1970s Caldwell saw one of the key problems of international relations in the previous decade as the 'accelerated depletion of global resources', along with the hardening of nuclear alliances and ongoing militarisation throughout the world.[84]

It was not just Caldwell who saw the linkages between these issues. Sheila Oakes, who was CND chairman before Caldwell, also argued that issues of nuclear weapons and disarmament could not be taken in isolation. She argued that

> it is vital to keep in mind that the problems relating to the weapons of mass destruction and disarmament, cannot in the end be taken in isolation. They relate to the other problems – The population explosion, environmental destruction/contamination/pollution. Irresponsible use of irreplaceable natural resources. Abuse of technology. Poverty. Race hatreds.

Yet, Oakes did not think that these were issues on which CND as an organisation needed to have policies. Rather they were things that individual members needed to be informed about.[85] This fed into a long-running debate that was once again heating up at the end of 1969 about what sort of issues CND should take up. This debate, which we will return to in the next chapter, had been ongoing throughout the 1960s. But even when CND remained solely focused on the bomb, the bomb itself was a manifestation of human over-reliance on technology. As Ritchie Calder warned *Sanity* readers in 1969, 'all the components of George Orwell's 1984 are already here', including bugging equipment, photography and surveillance, 'brain-washing' and subliminal messages. It was these technological developments, these machines, that were going to strip people of their rights.[86] The bomb remained 'the outstanding symbol of Man's wrong turning along the evolutionary road' and CND's battle against it was part of an epic battle in which 'Man – the thinking, feeling, creating being – confronts the machine with all its awesome, dreadful power to kill, maim, oppress and destroy'.[87] CND was therefore pitting itself against the worst aspects of modernity.

CND was the only one of these groups to speak specifically about the 'utopian' ideal that they wished to create. For Caldwell this utopia was a backward move, a retreat into a simpler world and a simpler life. Although his vision of a 'better time' was different, Caldwell's desire to return to a 'better time' is reminiscent of those who pined for imperial

greatness.[88] He advocated 'voluntary poverty', saying that people and societies should 'dispens[e] with the superfluous and dangerous toys of technological ingenuity'. Only in this way would a real future be guaranteed. Caldwell found that

> to retreat voluntarily to simplicity and stability having supped of the emptiness, anxiety and terror of affluence seems to me no bad future, whether measured against the disasters that otherwise await us, or against the terrifying technological utopias projected for us by the very architects of our present crisis.[89]

While Caldwell did not describe his vision as utopian, saving that for those who embraced technology, Sheila Oakes embraced the label. In 1969 on the pages of *Sanity* she told supporters,

> I have a vision of the world as it ought to be. You have one also. They will probably not be the same although they will overlap in many places. They will both be described as utopian by denigrators. (What's wrong with Utopia anyway?)[90]

It was up to supporters of CND to show the British public that something different was possible. Throughout the 1960s CND maintained this hopeful attitude, that there was the potential for change and that crisis could be a positive thing. The end of the empire meant they could reconstruct and reposition post-imperial Britain along the lines of their ideals. The impact of the end of empire on them was not to make them cynical, but to show that progress along an enlightened path was possible and could be applied to different areas, particularly in eschewing nuclear weapons.

Conclusion

British society was criticised from all sides in the 1960s. In the early part of the decade the left were critical of Macmillan and the Conservative government and many referred to Britain as a 'stagnant society'. By the end of the decade Harold Wilson's Labour government had created a number of reforms that, for the right especially, heralded the end of decency and morality. But for CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement the 1960s was a time of hope. Change was clearly possible, and the end of the empire was a demonstration of this. New states were being created on the basis of equality, even if only rhetorically.

Therefore, it did not seem impossible that Britain too could change. CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement largely agreed that a radical transformation of society was necessary. Yet, they continued to hold out hope that such a transformation would occur and were optimistic that it was possible. As Mervyn Rice said in *Sanity* in 1965, in spite of 'mistrust, . . . suspicion . . . [and] hatred . . . this world is basically good. People are basically good'. While they may have been led astray, they had 'been given a world in which to build a society based on human brotherhood' and they – CND and other groups of the radical left – were keen to try and rebuild it along these lines.[91]

It was people, more particularly apathetic people, which was the main stumbling block for the creation of the 'ideal' British society that these organisations put forth. But once the people were educated, as each of these groups believed, once they knew what was really going on, they would support the goal of creating a new, better, post-imperial Britain. CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement each saw being British as the key to their legitimacy and power and were keen to protect this identity and position themselves clearly within British society and traditions. While some concerns were raised about the British people, particularly by the end of the 1960s, each of these groups remained optimistic, believing that British people were the key to their own success and to the creation of an ideal British society.

Part III

‘Race’ and Post-Imperial Britishness

7
A Unified or Divided Left?

CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement each had their own specific priorities and interests. Whether they were single-issue campaigns, like CND and the AAM, or had more wide-ranging concerns, like the NUS and NICR movement, they all had clearly defined interests and main concerns. Why, then, should they have a stance on 'race'? Why should any of these organisations or groups set up to campaign on specific issues necessarily be opposed to racism? There are three main answers to this question. The first is that many of the members of these groups did care about racial discrimination. They may have joined organisations to campaign on specific issues, but the vast majority of members of CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement were fundamentally opposed to discrimination on racial, and other, bases. In ignoring this we would therefore be doing a disservice to these people, simplifying them and their concerns to fit the single focus of the organisations to which they belonged. The second answer to the question concerns the larger historiographical debate and public memory of these groups, which sees them as part of a larger move within the West away from materialistic towards humanitarian concerns, as discussed in Chapter 5. CND, the AAM and their membership have often been seen as epitomising the generation gap and shift in values that defined the 1960s.[1] It is thus important to examine the extent to which members of these groups fit into this assessment and were interested in a wider range of issues. Finally, and most importantly, these groups and their members were involved in the ongoing debates about 'race' and national identity that were taking place in the 1960s. They were involved in the creation of post-imperial Britain – in the discussion taking place about what Britain should become. Over the last six chapters it has been argued that while these groups were focused on their own

issues, they were involved in the wider debates and discussions taking place within Britain about Britain's post-imperial identity. These organisations were fundamental in the redefinition of what it meant to be British in the 1960s, which necessarily meant engaging with the issue of 'race'. For too long scholars have seen the immigration debate in the late 1950s and 1960s as divorced from wider societal issues and changes in this period. 'Race' was not a marginal issue on the perimeter of popular debates, but was central to public understanding of Britain's position in the post-imperial world and of post-imperial British identity.[2] This final section therefore looks at how these groups were engaging with concepts and ideas of 'race'.[3]

However, before we explore attitudes to 'race' specifically, we need to explore the desire within these groups to stay limited in their focus. It was argued both at the time and subsequently that membership in these groups was a broad statement of permissive values. These groups are often seen as part of the 'permissive', 'radical' or 'revolutionary' 1960s. In 1965 CND supporter Mervyn Jones articulated this criticism that was levelled at CND and the left more generally. He argued that there were myths within conservative and government circles that people were simply

> ready to gather in Trafalgar Square any Sunday, exchanging one banner or badge for another as occasion suits, or combining the lot: people will back any cause with a progressive flavour, from nuclear disarmament to abortion law reform and from the abolition of theatre censorship to freedom for Angola.[4]

Jones argued that there was a grain of truth in this, but strongly denied the implication that these people did not really care about the issues they protested, but were simply out to oppose *something*. This view of both the 1960s in general, and CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement in particular, is largely based on myth and symbolism and this is the first issue that will be discussed in this chapter. Next we will explore the relationships between these groups and others on the left. Finally this chapter will examine the debates within these organisations about the extent to which they did, or should, represent a wider leftist worldview or stay focused on a single issue. Before exploring how exactly these groups were engaging with 'race', the topic of the final two chapters, we need first to examine their internal limitations which often prevented activity in this area, which is the subject of this chapter.

Relations between Groups

Each of these organisations has been referred to as part of the 'new' social movements of the postwar period to which sociologists have devoted much time and attention.[5] The interactions within and between these groups and their wider movements tells us a great deal about the organisations themselves and the context in which they operated. There were a number of anti-nuclear groups in Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s and the membership between them overlapped significantly. The principal groups outside of CND were the DAC and the Committee of 100. The DAC pre-dated CND and the two groups worked remarkably well together given their very different tactics.[6] There were frequent negotiations about how best to manage this working relationship. For example, there was discussion about whether the DAC should have a representative on the National Co-ordinating Committee of CND. However, on the whole the two groups readily agreed that it was in their best interest to work together as much as possible.[7] This was quite different from the relationship between CND and the Committee of 100, as we saw briefly in Chapters 5 and 6. The Committee of 100 was created out of CND in 1961 and the manner in which it came about alienated and angered CND Chairman Canon Collins to such an extent that the two organisations kept their distance.[8] Within the anti-nuclear movement each of these groups put forward quite distinct views about the extent to which they should focus on the bomb and only the bomb, or see the bomb as part of a wider problem that required a broader solution. The DAC and the Committee of 100 took a much more holistic approach, connecting nuclear weapons with a number of other social ills. Michael Randle, a leader of the DAC and later supporter of the Committee of 100, was, for example, involved in the creation of the group 'Multi-Racial Britain' in 1962, which became the Campaign against Racial Discrimination in 1965.[9] The Committee of 100 tried to broaden their interest to make connections around the world. This reflected the international interest of their president, Bertrand Russell.[10] The extent to which the Committee of 100 successfully made these international connections, however, is somewhat uncertain. They did note in 1961 that their international relations subgroup, which was designed to consist of 15 members, only had 'one man who is not even a member of the Committee'.[11] The smaller numbers of supporters of these organisations, and their lower national profile, might have meant that it was easier for them to take on a variety of issues, both domestically and internationally, without

having to justify or even clarify their position to the press. The DAC and the Committee of 100 were also not focused on winning political support, which allowed them a greater latitude than CND in the activity they undertook.

The AAM too was part of a larger movement that was focused on the welfare of people in Africa. The Movement for Colonial Freedom had been an important impetus for wider concerns about the well-being and welfare of those in Britain's current or former colonies and protectorates in the early postwar period.[12] Many of those who supported the AAM had been involved with the MCF. Despite this, the AAM was critical of itself for failing to 'collaborate fully with other organisations' who had similar or complementary objectives.[13] Despite their difficulty in working with other organisations in the early 1960s, the AAM always relied on students, both as individuals and as a group, to help and support their activities. Throughout the early 1960s the AAM kept detailed records of their student members and student groups. They reported in 1963 that just over a third of their members were full-time students and the following year more than half of their membership were full-time students.[14] They came to rely increasingly heavily on the activities and activism of students who could be counted on to join a demonstration on short notice or give up a few hours a week to sell their newspaper. At the end of 1963 a number of meetings were held throughout the county on the issue of refugees, which resulted in the creation of 'many student anti-racialist societies'.[15] During the year 1963–64 the number of student societies affiliated with the AAM grew from 4 to 22. While most of them described themselves as 'Societies against Racial Discrimination', the AAM were keen to point out to their supporters that 'most of their activity is on anti-apartheid work'.[16] The AAM also cooperated with the Student Co-ordinating Committee for Racial Equality (SCORE) set up in 1964.[17] However, this support was limited. When in July that year SCORE said they wanted to become the anti-apartheid student body, coordinating all existing student anti-apartheid groups, the AAM executive was somewhat wary. The AAM executive were interested in how this could be done administratively, but agreed to 'encourage them without committing AAM to support'.[18] This somewhat ambivalent attitude towards student groups remained in the late 1960s. They continued to keep student organisations at arm's length while they reported that the main outlet for their newspaper, the *Anti-Apartheid News*, was 'local committees and university anti-racist groups'.[19] The AAM were largely dependent on the actions and activities of student groups, but reluctantly so.

The NICR movement was made up of a number of civil rights groups, some of whom worked together much more easily and successfully than others. The Northern Irish Civil Rights Association was created in 1967 specifically to unite the disparate groups working on civil rights in Northern Ireland – to make the amorphous movement more clearly organised and, hopefully, more effective.[20] It was NICRA, along with the CSJ and PD who were the largest civil rights groups and the ones most frequently mentioned in this study. Civil rights groups, and their members, also worked with a variety of organisations whose focus was not strictly civil rights. In the early 1960s there were active CND groups in Belfast in which many of those later involved in civil rights work were involved.[21] Kevin Boyle, a law lecturer and later leader of PD, supported CND. He kept a collection of material pertaining to CND's 1965 Easter march.[22] Eamonn McCann, a civil rights campaigner active in Derry, had also attended CND marches.[23] Through the middle of the decade activists who were later involved in civil rights activity were, like their English counterparts, demonstrating against the war in Vietnam and the British government's ownership of nuclear weapons.[24] The relationship between Northern Irish civil rights and CND, however, was not reciprocated. There was almost complete silence within CND about the situation in Northern Ireland throughout the 1960s. Northern Ireland was only ever mentioned as a place with a fairly active CND group. When the situation in Northern Ireland deteriorated in the late 1960s and early 1970s there was debate within CND about whether or not they should have a position on the conflict with the majority arguing that they should not. This was not, however, universal, as some local groups, such as Leeds, decided that 'the campaign for peace and civil rights in Northern Ireland is an important part of the general campaign for peace'.[25] However, other local groups were against including Ireland in their campaign. One supporter, Cleveland H. Hood from Middelsborough CND, illustrated the bigotry that existed, even within CND, towards the Irish. He said that 'Ireland has nothing to do with CND. The Irish folk, especially the Catholics, are a bitter, hating, illogical, murderous, unforgiving obstinate lot'.[26] While this view was criticised by other members of CND, this was not an unheard of opinion both within and outside CND or across the British left.[27]

By the end of the 1960s the NICR movement, like the AAM, was heavily reliant on the support of students and the NUS. In fact it was the NUS specifically, and students more generally, who had the strongest connections across these organisations. Despite the strictures of the NUS constitution, which have been discussed throughout this book and

will be discussed in more detail in the following two chapters, individual student unions, student groups and students themselves were deeply involved in CND, the AAM and the NICR movement throughout the 1960s. There was not much discussion within the NUS council about CND or the AAM. Because of constitutional limitations, events in Northern Ireland benefitted from occurring after the NUS constitution had changed. Delegates from Northern Ireland attended each of the NUS councils, which is one reason why the NUS was particularly well informed about circumstances in Northern Ireland. Throughout the 1960s delegates from Northern Ireland were keen to have their particular issues and problems discussed by NUS and to receive help for their projects, including setting up youth clubs and voluntary assistance schemes.[28] As the situation in Northern Ireland began to deteriorate in late 1968 and 1969, the NUS became increasingly concerned. In April 1969 NUS council passed an emergency motion deploring 'the continued refusal of the Northern Ireland Government to introduce civil rights reforms' and called upon the British Government 'to immediately take steps to ensure that fundamental rights and dignities are upheld in this part of the United Kingdom'.[29] This the British government attempted to do by sending troops to Northern Ireland to 'keep the peace' in the summer of 1969.[30] In November 1969 the NUS passed a resolution mandating the executive to 'openly support groups [in Northern Ireland] whose aims fall within the general aims of NUS policy'. They thought that the first priority of both the Westminster and Stormont governments should be to rectify injustices in housing, employment and electoral laws, and argued that the long-term path to peace lay in the removal of segregation – a line of argument that mirrored almost exactly that of the civil rights movement.[31] The NUS's concerns about equality in Northern Ireland mirrored their wider belief in the creation of a more equal post-imperial British society, which we saw in the previous chapter.

Each of these organisations were part of wider 'movements', but this did not necessarily mean that they found it easy to work with other people or groups. CND and the AAM in particular struggled to cooperate effectively with other organisations who had similar overall objectives. The NUS and NICR movement, on the other hand, prioritised the development of effective working relationships with a variety of organisations both inside and outside their respective movements. These relationships were not always smooth or easy, but it is clear that they were valued by each of these groups. The radical left was clearly fractured in the 1960s. There was not one single unified left-wing voice about how best

to realise a progressive, modern post-imperial Britain, although there were certainly overlapping ideas and attitudes.

Symbolism vs Reality

CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement all have symbolic legacies which, at least partly, eclipse their reality. Both their supporters and their opponents saw these organisations as representative of something bigger – of wider-ranging social changes or the beginning of a revolutionary change in society. Part of the difficulty in discerning the extent to which these organisations represented aspects of a unified left-wing worldview in this period is the symbolic importance that they developed and the myths that were developed around them both during the 1960s and after. This symbolic or mythic importance was used by both supporters and opponents and could be positive or negative. The gulf between the mythical view of these groups and reality was particularly pronounced in CND, which is the main focus of this section.

In the mid-1960s it was argued that CND and the rest of the anti-nuclear movement were 'the product of, and a protest against, mass society'. They were seen, by both some supporters and some opponents, to be protesting not only against nuclear weapons, but also against the 'unforeseen implications of the welfare state'.[32] For many people sympathetic with the anti-nuclear movement and CND, the campaign opposed everything that was wrong with British society. This gave CND a power and prestige well beyond what its formal membership would have demanded, but this view of CND was also highly problematic to the organisation's leadership. We will look more specifically at what the leadership wanted in the next section, but it is important to note that the symbolic nature of CND greatly constrained the message that the leadership could communicate to the public. No matter what was actually said, many people saw in CND what they wanted, or feared, to see about the period of change in which they lived.

Writing at the end of the 1960s, Frank Parkin argued that CND 'provided the one single political movement in which "progressive" values were fully represented in their pure form, and where they could remain untarnished by the demands of electoral expediency'.[33] Parkin was writing at a time when the left seemed particularly fragmented and it is therefore no wonder that he exalted in the perceived 'purity' of CND's aims and motives. But Parkin's view of CND was highly simplified.

His research of the organisation was conducted after CND's membership numbers began to dwindle and does not take account of the great deal of division and discussion that took place within the organisation on many, if not most, issues. The 'broader implications' of CND, or the ways in which it seemed to represent wider issues, was seen as potentially problematic by many groups, even those whose members were largely supportive of CND's intentions. This was true of the British leadership of the Quaker Church, who largely supported CND's aims. They feared that in participating in the anti-nuclear movement, and CND in particular, young Quakers were being 'swept off' to 'join the Teddy Boys, the Income Tax dodgers and the Algerian "colons" in bringing the law and democratic government into contempt'.[34] The conflation of issues and groups here clearly illustrates the extent to which CND and the anti-nuclear movement more generally were used as shorthand for wide-ranging concerns about social changes during the 1960s.

It was not just CND, the AAM, the NUS or NICR groups themselves which took on a symbolic importance. Some of their specific campaigns and events also had particular symbolic importance. The Aldermaston March, the most important event in the yearly CND calendar, came to symbolise not only the anti-nuclear movement but opposition to the established order. The idea to march from London to the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston during Easter 1958 was not CND's. While CND did support the first march, it was the DAC who organised it.[35] The following year CND took over its organisation and reversed the direction of the march to end in a large rally at Trafalgar Square. The leadership of CND thought that this would enable them to get more public support, more publicity and deliver a stronger message to the government.[36] While the Aldermaston March did change form over the course of the 1960s, it continued to dominate the CND calendar. In 1962 the executive reported that it was 'generally agreed that Aldermaston, like the CND symbol, is now so well known and so identified with the Easter Demonstrations that it would be very unwise to divorce any demonstration from Aldermaston'.[37] Yet, this divorcing of Easter demonstrations from the Aldermaston site did occur between 1964 and 1968 and attendance at the yearly Easter demonstration dropped off in these years.[38] The symbolic importance of Aldermaston was also not confined to Britain. The executive were quite clear that the Aldermaston March had, by 1962, 'become an integral part of the world nuclear disarmament movement'.[39] It was the march itself, rather than any slogans

or demands made by those on the march, or the organisation that was behind the march, which had captured the imagination of both Britons and activists abroad. 'Aldermaston' became shorthand for a large, peaceful demonstration by those on the left against the world as it was and for a world that they imagined. Regardless of the CND message, the existence and activities of the organisation were interpreted by many both within and outside of the anti-nuclear movement as a general statement against the prevailing system and representative of a wider anti-establishment ethos. The mythic importance of CND often eclipsed what the leadership itself wanted to do, making it difficult for them to keep their desired focus, a struggle to which we now turn.

Staying 'Single-issue' in the Early 1960s

The mythology surrounding these groups pushed them to broaden their scope. However, it was not just pressure from the outside that the leadership of these organisations had to contend with. There were also deep internal divisions within these groups about the extent to which they should be focused on a single issue or represent a wider worldview. As we saw in Chapter 4, each of these organisations was made up of a wide range of people and contained a number of internal groups or factions. There was pressure from a variety of directions which tried to widen the scope of each of these organisations, encouraging them to take a broader view which saw the connections between issues.

The desire to remain single issue, to focus entirely on one issue such as nuclear weapons or South African apartheid, was strongly argued by the leadership of these organisations in the first half of the 1960s. The reasoning for this focus was not a lack of interest wider issues, but largely reflected tactical concerns. For example, Canon Collins, who was particularly vocal about maintaining CND's single-issue focus, was also the leader of Christian Action and obviously cared deeply for disadvantaged people around the world.[40] It was not just the leadership who argued that CND should keep a simple and single message of British unilateral nuclear disarmament. According to Peggy Duff, 'most of the local groups wanted to campaign on the Bomb and only on the Bomb'.[41] The 1963 annual conference was particularly fraught over this issue. A resolution was proposed for CND to widen its scope, which was opposed by 11 local groups, including those from Lingfield, Witney, North Devon, Paddington and North Kensington, Wrexham, Sutton and District, Sonning Common, Lichfield, Colchester, Gloucester, Ruislip and

Northwood, and Bridgwater. On the other hand there were only six local groups who supported CND, widening its scope, including those from Highgate, Bristol, Hull, Canterbury, Horsham and Croydon.[42] We can see the wide geographical range of this division, but also the overwhelming majority of local groups who wanted CND to stay narrowly focused. This decision was reinforced two years later.[43] Despite the calls from a variety of groups within CND, it was the view of this majority of local organisations, and the leadership itself, which prevailed in the first half of the 1960s, keeping CND clearly focused, as Peggy Duff said, 'on the bomb and only the bomb'.

Within CND demands to widen the scope of the campaign came from a wide variety of people and groups who had widely divergent aims. The most moderate calls for CND to broaden its scope came from the specialist groups within the organisation. These included the Christian CND, Women's CND, Youth CND and Scientists CND. They each tried to promote CND's message within these particular circles, but also to widen CND's concerns to include the particular interests of these groups of people. The specialist groups attempted to show some of the ways in which sections of the population from particularly identity groups interacted with the issue of nuclear weapons and how nuclear weapons affected certain people, such as women, the young, students or Christians.[44]

More radical arguments for broadening CND's scope came from a number of groups, including the Independent Nuclear Disarmament Election Committee and the Committee of 100, both of which originated within CND. According to Peggy Duff it was these groups

> who wanted a much broader dissenting programme, including other social ills, such as housing and race, which could be linked, but only just, to the campaign's original concerns, financially, because the money spent on arms could be used for housing, and racialism in some countries could lead to war.[45]

The fact that CND did not take up this call to broaden its scope was highly criticised by some, particularly in the late 1970s and 1980s. Peter Sedgwick, who was active in the early 1960s in CND, criticised the organisation for having failed dreadfully 'as a training-ground for a permanent commitment to radical politics'.[46] He particularly remembered an incident in which an anti-nuclear campaigner was prevented by the chairman from supporting an illegal seaman's strike in 1960. Sedgwick attributed this to the Canon Collins's 'desperate concern to be unsullied, to keep faith with the vicars and the MPs'.[47] This criticism was also

taken up by some scholars of CND, such as Nigel Young, who had been an active member of CND in the early 1960s, prolific contributor to *Sanity* and then went on to write a number of works about CND. Young criticised CND in the early 1960s for being too narrowly focused, which, he said, reflected the failure of the New Left both within and outside the organisation to 'impress on the movement an adequate synthesis of concerns and visions of change, a convincing overall analysis and a strategy that could set disarmament in the larger and global context and give CND a manifesto'.[48] It was their inability to think bigger and present a clearly connected worldview which, Young argued, led to CND's demise after 1962.

Youth CND often pushed for the organisation to widen its scope. Youth CND in particular was highly critical of the 'vast amounts of money and resources' that were squandered on nuclear weapons, especially, as they said, when 'two thirds of the world are starving and social services and facilities remain inadequate in our own country'.[49] Youth CND, more than any of the other specialist groups, tried to find the common link between nuclear weapons and other social ills. In 1963 they identified this common link, saying that 'the attitude which results in nuclear weapons and the attitude which results in colour bars have the same root cause: FEAR'.[50] What exactly they thought people were afraid of is somewhat unclear. They could simply be talking about a fear of the unknown, but I would argue that they were referring to an underlying fear of what Britain would be without empire, which unified questions about international power and nuclear weapons with immigration and the changing racial make-up of the country. For Youth CND it was not enough simply to tackle nuclear weapons, as this root cause would remain. For Youth CND maintaining a single-minded focus on weapons alone would not only be inadequate, but also ineffective.

The leadership of the AAM too was subject to constant pressure to broaden its scope. Within the AAM the division over whether the organisation should stay single issue or encompass a more radical worldview cut across and reinforced a number of existing splits within the organisation. The largest of these was the separation between a very knowledgeable leadership that was well connected to, if not directly from, South Africa versus a rank and file who were often more aware or concerned about domestic and local issues which they wished to incorporate into the AAMs activities. The AAM leadership were not solely concerned about South Africa. They did send a letter of condolence to the Welsh miners after the Abertillery disaster in 1960, but

they were concerned about incorporating long-term issues and campaigns that would distract people from their work on South Africa.[51] In 1961 there was discussion within the AAM national committee about whether they should take a stand on the proposed Commonwealth Immigrants Bill. There were voices within the national committee which argued that their 'field could be much wider', but the executive were concerned about the potential diluting of their focus on South Africa. No decision was taken to do anything about the Commonwealth Immigrants Act.[52] In fact, this piece of legislation was not discussed again at either the national or executive committees. Through the first half of the 1960s the leadership of the AAM were determined to keep the organisation a single-issue campaign. In 1964 they stated very clearly that they would 'direct [their] activities exclusively on S. African matters'.[53]

The NUS too was divided about the extent to which it should focus solely on issues that affected students because they were students, or take a wider interest in social and political issues. This debate was further complicated because it was enshrined within Clause 3 of the NUS constitution, which limited discussion to matters affecting students *because* they were students. The fact that this was a constitutional issue meant that the division and disagreement on this matter became extremely heated and was very long-lasting, needing, as it did, two-thirds of delegates at the NUS council meeting to agree to a constitutional change. The debate about Clause 3 cropped up at nearly every NUS council meeting throughout the 1960s. Small successes were achieved for those who wanted the NUS to be able to address more issues. In 1963 the wording of the constitution was amended to allow discussion 'on all matters affecting education'.[54] That shifted the debate to one about the extent to which all matters affected education in one way or another. As one delegate argued in 1964, the NUS should be able to discuss apartheid in South Africa because it was impossible to 'separate educational apartheid from apartheid as a whole'.[55] This delegate was unsuccessful on this occasion, as the motion to discuss apartheid was ruled out of order. This debate, and others like it, fuelled the division within NUS between those who wanted to remain focused on fighting only for better conditions for their membership and those who saw this goal as connected to creating a better Britain and better world.

The issue of drawing parallels and links between a variety of campaigns was neither controversial nor divisive within the Northern Irish civil rights movement. The circumstances and context of Northern Ireland meant that creating rhetorical, as well as real, links between

their concerns and other issues was widely seen as necessary. The civil rights issue in itself covered a great many things, from the gerrymandering of electoral boundaries, to the use of multiple votes in local elections for home and business owners, to inequalities in housing and employment.[56] The multitude of issues in many ways required a diverse and wide-ranging campaign and debate. But many of those who were involved in civil rights organisations saw them as part of a wider movement working towards a society based on equality, fairness and peace, which easily connected it to a wide variety of other organisations and movements.

Throughout the first half of the 1960s CND, the AAM and the NUS were all limited in the scope of their interests and activities. This reflected the attitudes of their leadership and the majority of their membership at this time. They reflected a view that individual issues could be solved individually. However, from the middle of the 1960s the context in which they worked was clearly changing. The ramifications of the end of the British Empire were becoming clearer and were changing the context within which these organisations functioned. By the middle of the 1960s the empire was clearly coming to an end, which undermined the idea that individual issues could be treated separately. Instead a wider sense of general crisis prevailed which saw a variety of issues as interlinked. There was also a plethora of other organisations being created, many of which actively connected a variety of left-wing issues. CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement adapted to their own unique circumstances. CND, the AAM and the NUS succumbed to the demands of some of their membership to campaign on a wider variety of issues. They began more actively to promote the connections between their main focus, be it the bomb, apartheid or student welfare, and a wide variety of social and economic issues. This was not a new departure for the NICR movement, but carried on apace.

Changing Context and Changing Attitudes to Left-wing Unity

There was a growing move within the British radical left in the middle of the 1960s to create a cross-cutting organisation like the 'Radical Alliance' created by Tariq Ali in 1965.[57] These movements helped to shape the context in which CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement existed. It was no longer viable for them to remain strictly focused on a single issue. CND resisted this move most strongly and successfully into the late 1960s, while the voices demanding broader action became

louder. The AAM leadership too succumbed to the idea that they could not separate out the situation in South Africa from other issues around the world and in Britain. As we have seen, the change of the NUS constitution in 1969 allowed the organisation to shift focus and significantly broaden its area of interest while the NICR movement continued to see a broader view as more conducive to their success.

While the desire to keep CND a single-issue campaign remained powerful into the late 1960s, those who argued that CND should make more clear links between nuclear weapons and other issues were getting stronger and were able to ensure that CND was working with a wider variety of organisations on a wider number of issues by the late 1960s. In the middle of the 1960s those who advocated that CND should broaden its scope began to use the organisation's own moral language to make their point. In a 1966 article for *Sanity* Mervyn Jones argued that the left was failing to do what it was 'uniquely qualified to do', namely to 'make connections between particular campaigns, to unify them with the cement of its outlook and its understanding'. He congratulated those on the left for being internationalists and regarding 'the human race as one family', which, he thought, 'valuably redress[es] the balance of English insularity and selfishness'. This was part of a wider trend, which we saw in Chapter 5, to draw clearer parallels between people across national boundaries. However, Jones also thought that CND needed to take more of an interest in the everyday issues faced by the working class in Britain.[58] According to Jones it was the moral duty of the left to show how these issues were connected and to take a stand for equality and human rights around the world. Prominent members of CND bemoaned what they saw as the splintering of the left into a large number of small and divided groups. For younger members of the campaign, particularly those in the Colleges and Universities section of CND (CUCaND), the creation of post-imperial Britain necessitated a change in CND policy. Richard Hammersley argued in 1966 that it was time to see disarmament as part 'of the wider questions of international relations' in the main because not doing so would mean that CND ended up with rather odd and reactionary bedfellows. He was concerned that Britain's

> economic policy, the exclusion of further immigrants, the browbeating of the Commonwealth, weakness in Rhodesia, the 'East of Suez' orientation and the consequent alliance with American policy in Asia and elsewhere, are identifying this country more and more with the neo-colonialist, racial and rich country's stance in the world.[59]

CND were trying to set themselves up against a growing right-wing neo-imperialist view that remembered the empire in positive and nostalgic ways, as described by Schwarz.[60] If CND wanted to offer a left-wing and progressive alternative they needed to consider all of these issues. They needed a more widely progressive worldview to be truly post-imperial.

The debate between those who were termed 'purists' or 'fundamentalists' who wanted CND to stay single issue and those who called for CND to take up a broader policy was carried out at CND's 1970 national conference. Jones, reporting on the conference, said that the argument between these two groups 'began in the first hour of the conference and reappeared in virtually every debate'. He reported in some detail resolutions put forward by the Newcastle CND group and CUCaND for CND to see their opposition to nuclear weapons in much broader terms. The strongest cases for expanding CND's remit came from Terence Heelas and Malcolm Caldwell, who had both previously written pieces for *Sanity* on this issue. However, the reply from Dick Nettleton, general secretary of CND between 1967 and 1973, was decidedly negative. He said that 'the campaign had to decide whether it was a campaign for nuclear disarmament or a body for promoting a general foreign policy'.[61]

In the early 1970s CND was looking for a practical way of uniting groups and they once again fell back on their Easter march. This march, it was argued, was 'nothing if not a united demonstration', as it included 'members of all parties and no party, all religions and no religion, a great variety of trade unions and many progressive organisations'. This was crucial because their 'aims can in the long run be achieved only by such unity'.[62] There was certainly a more vocal and stronger call within CND to widen their range of campaigning issues in the late 1960s and early 1970s, although there continued to be debate within the organisation about how best to do this and how far they should go.

Around the middle of the 1960s the AAM executive was also coming tentatively to agree that they may have to embrace activity on issues other than South Africa. While the AAM were still committed, in 1964, to campaigning only on South Africa, when a local group asked the executive if it 'would be correct in doing work in their own area on local colour questions' the chairman explained that 'while nationally we avoided taking up any other issue than South Africa', they did welcome the local group's initiative and admitted that local groups had done this before 'from time to time'.[63] By 1966 the AAM executive admitted that they had a larger cause, above and beyond South Africa. In the annual report that year they stated that the AAM was for 'racial

co-operation and peace in the world'.[64] The organisation's newspaper also reflected this shift. From 1966 it was decided that *Anti-Apartheid News* would run editorials and stories on 'racial problems everywhere', which they thought would help to stir interest and broaden the appeal of the paper without entirely losing the focus on South Africa.[65] The executive committee agreed that the editorial board of the newspaper should be given greater freedom to discuss a variety of issues, including the 'race relations question in this country'.[66] Even on the subject of immigration legislation, which the AAM executive had avoided at the beginning of the 1960s, the organisation was now beginning to be concerned. In 1966 a deputation from the AAM met with the home secretary to discuss the difficulties presented to South Africans by the Immigration Appeals Committee. Although their concern was primarily for South Africans, this does show a shift in tactic and policy for the organisation, as they were engaging with domestic British politics rather than only their international policies towards the South African state. We will discuss the AAM's growing interest in British immigration and 'race' policy in more detail in the final chapter.

In 1969 there were attempts to organise a National Convention of the Left to try and promote cooperation in light of the upcoming election. The AAM agreed to send a representative with the intention of getting a commitment against apartheid.[67] CND took up the idea of this convention more fully in the early 1970s. The idea of the convention had been proposed by a member of CND as an independent coordinating group promoting unity across the left. It was reported to CND supporters that the objective of the conference would be to focus on 'the long-term future of the Left rather than on the function of the Left in relation to the election, as was originally planned'.[68] Even though the idea had originally come out of CND, the organisation's leadership remained somewhat ambivalent towards the convention. CND were asked in May 1970 if it would take part in the 'Race Group' of the convention. The executive decided that rather than sending a specific delegate they would ask someone they knew was already a member of the group to keep them informed.[69]

Around the same time there were also proposals put forward for the creation of a Peace Convention to unite organisations working on peace campaigns throughout the United Kingdom. This proposal originally emanated from outside CND, but CND quickly tried to take the lead. In January 1970 CND set up a subcommittee to discuss how to deal with the convention, agreeing to sponsor it 'in order to bring to public

notice the issues of peace and disarmament'.[70] By the late summer *Sanity* was reporting that 'representatives of 66 organisations representing more than 200,000 people took part in the National Peace Convention initiated by CND'.[71] For some within CND the Peace Convention indicated the possibility of opening CND up to other issues, broadening its support and saving it from its increasingly marginal status. Nigel Young argued that CND, which had once been 'the mainstream of British radicalism', was, by the 1970s 'on the periphery of the movement' and this was largely because it had 'no analysis of its relationship to the other groups that have overtaken it' on the radical edge of the left. He complained that CND had 'become identified with a failed political tactic and tired political style' and thought that 'the coming Peace Congress offers tremendous opportunities for CND to shift gear, relate to the rest of the movement, regain its voice, and put the bomb back on the agenda'. The Peace Convention, it was hoped, would show 'where CND fits into the movement for an alternative society' and the common ground that they had with the 'unrepresented' people in trying to 'build a society without war, racism, homelessness, poverty and exploitation'.[72] The statement agreed at the convention was a broader version of CND's own policy showing the input of people like Nigel Young. The convention agreed to resist 'a lifting of the embargo on arms to South Africa; – the restoration of a British military presence East of Suez; – the building of a fifth Polaris submarine and the development of multi-warheads (MIRV)'.[73] The convention took up all of the issues that CND campaigned on, but they also addressed issues that CND had explicitly decided to avoid, including Northern Ireland. The convention also took a much clearer and more explicit line against racial discrimination than CND would allow itself, agreeing that 'racialism in Britain must be vigorously opposed wherever and through whomever it is raised. There must be no discrimination against British citizens, regardless of their place of origin or the colour of their skin.'[74] In 1971 the CND executive proposed that the convention should meet again, although this time they should limit discussion to 'perhaps three' issues.[75] What happened to this proposal is difficult to determine as there are no further mentions of it in *Sanity* or the executive committee minutes of CND. It may have turned into the Conference on Nuclear Weapons and the Arms Race that was held in London in 1972 where members of the CND national council were among the 'nearly 300 delegates from 18 countries' in attendance.[76] While CND was not entirely happy with the outcome of this conference, their willingness to participate shows a marked change from their attitude a decade earlier.[77]

Clause 3 of the NUS constitution was finally changed in 1969 but not before it was the subject of long and vicious debates within NUS council. This was particularly evident in 1967 and 1968 when Geoff Martin, who firmly believed that the NUS should keep Clause 3 as it was, was president of the NUS.[78] Debates about the constitution in 1967 ended with the assertion once again that the NUS was not a 'general political forum'.[79] The issue was taken up at both council meetings in 1968. A number of delegates attempted to link constitutional change to issues which they believed students felt strongly about, such as racialism, to encourage them to support a change of constitution.[80] The debate was finally won by those advocating that the NUS take a wider perspective and the constitution changed in 1969 under the new president, Jack Straw. In opening the April 1969 NUS council, Straw argued that the most important task before delegates was 'to try and put these immediate student and educational problems in a wider context'. It was time, he argued, 'for NUS to look outward'.[81] In his first speech as president after the change in constitution, Straw said that

> students have shown that they are willing to come out of their shells of introspection, of concern only on internal issues, and have shown that they recognise that our problems on internal issues are only part and parcel of much wider social and political issues in society . . . This union stands for equality in education, and equality in our society. But above all, this union stands for democracy, and real democracy, in this country . . . The central theme in the student movement over the past two years – and one which must remain and be improved – has been the desire to restore dignity to individuals in our society, and allow them to exercise some control over their own environment.[82]

The NUS in the early 1970s was a much-changed organisation. It finally could, and did, take up a wide range of issues and campaigned on a wide variety of subjects. The NUS of the 1970s much more closely resembled the mythical 'student movement' of the 1960s.[83] In the 1970s the NUS took on radical oppositional campaigns and opinions and was not afraid to voice radical or revolutionary opinions, criticising the fundamentals of society, including attitudes to gender, 'race' and generation. Unfortunately, an examination of this shift in the NUS strays beyond the bounds of the current study, but it does help us illustrate the enormous changes that did take place over the course of the 1960s and once again illustrates the extent to which the 'myth' of the 1960s is

just that – a 'myth'. It is a backward projection of later events onto the 1960s which, in itself, was much more nuanced and contradictory, and mirrored those taking place about the British Empire itself.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1960s and early 1970s it was clear that many on the left had identified a lack of unity as a problem that needed to be overcome. In the middle of the 1960s the extent and impact of the end of empire was beginning to be recognised. Creating a post-imperial Britain required a wider and more interconnected view of the world and issues within British society. The myth or image that many people have of CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement, like that of the 1960s more generally, is a reflection of these organisations at the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s rather than one from the late 1950s and early 1960s. Both supporters and opponents have cultivated a view of these left-wing groups as unified and the result of wide-ranging worldviews. What has been left out of the record were the often deep schisms between and within these groups about the extent to which they should focus solely on one issue and ignore all others. The idea that organisations should focus solely on one issue prevailed in English social movements into the middle of the 1960s. This helps explain why these groups, particularly CND, were increasingly seen as out of step with a newer generation of activist in the late 1960s who saw all of their issues as intimately connected. Exploring this difference of opinion helps us, as historians, date the transitional and transformative aspect of the mythic 1960s – the move away from more traditional nineteenth- and early twentieth-century pressure group politics to a new kind of movement with a new kind of attitude – to the middle of the decade. It also helps us explain why there was not as much resistance to growing racism and discrimination in Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Those who may have been active in opposing such activity and actions, as the left had been during the 1930s, were actively engaged in other campaigns which separated out issues of 'race' and discrimination in Britain from their main areas of focus. But it is also important to highlight that there were always voices within these groups arguing the important connections between a variety of issues and inequality and discrimination around the world and in Britain. Over the course of the 1960s these voices became less and less single voices in the wind and were able to shift and reposition these organisations with differing levels of success. As we move on to the next two chapters to examine exactly

what these groups said about 'race', race relations and racial discrimination around the world and at home in Britain, it is crucial to remember that the leadership of these organisations were constantly subjected to pressure from their own membership not to have an opinion on these issues.

8
Opposition to Racial Inequality Outside Britain

Each of these organisations were deeply concerned about situations of inequality and injustice around the world. As we saw in the previous chapter these concerns were the subject of internal divisions within each of these groups. The leadership of CND, the AAM and the NUS was clearly determined to keep their organisations focused on their specific issues during the first half of the 1960s, but it was clear that there was strong grass-roots support for drawing links between these specific foci and wider issues. Many of the people who participated in and supported these organisations had wide-ranging concerns about a variety of issues. Underlying all of their particular campaigns was a deeply felt belief in equality and fairness and a desire to promote and consolidate these as key aspects of a new post-imperial Britishness. Opposition to racial discrimination was not new to the left wing. Campaigns to end slavery and later to grant independence to colonial territories had been popular campaigns of the left throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[1] However, the idea of foreign aid, that governments should intervene within a sovereign state even if only to assist the population, was relatively new.[2] While Britain was still an imperial power, the left's concerns about people around the world took the form of opposition to colonialism. Once these states had become independent this same concern could now be voiced in relation to specific issues of poverty and inequality which were intimately bound up with their view of post-imperial Britain.

In the 1960s the end of the British Empire coincided with two other important issues to make 'race' and racial discrimination key international issues. The concept of 'race' itself was undergoing study and

scrutiny in the postwar period. In the aftermath of the Second World War and the violence committed by the Nazis in the name of 'racial' purity, the concept was discussed and analysed on many fronts. The United Nations took up the issue with UNESCO publishing two statements on 'race' in 1950 and 1952 respectively.[3] The impetus behind this action was to disprove notions of racial superiority and inferiority by showing that there was no scientific basis for these ideas. Instead, differences between 'ethnic groups', the preferred terminology of UNESCO, it was argued, were culturally constructed.[4] The extent to which this scientific assessment of 'race' trickled down to the general public is difficult to determine. However, it is clear that the acceptability and respectability of overtly racialised attitudes and discrimination based on these grounds was undermined in the aftermath of the war and Holocaust. While 'race' was still discussed at all levels of society, there was a growing sense that 'in public' one should be careful about what was said. And this was most visible within the middle classes.

The second development which was shaping attitudes to 'race' in Britain was the success of the American civil rights movement. This movement had been in existence for much of the twentieth century, but began to see significant successes and international publicity in the late 1950s and early 1960s.[5] These three things together – the discrediting of 'race' in the wake of the Second World War and Holocaust, the success of the US civil rights movement and the end of the British Empire – made it both possible and highly attractive for the British left to take up the issue of 'race' equality on the international stage. They could now engage with the concerns of people in former colonies with a new legitimacy, not as members of an empire, but as the citizens of a new, progressive and modern post-imperial Britain. These groups felt that their concerns about poverty and inequality around the world could be separated from the baggage of empire. Rather than simply working to make empire 'better', they could now work directly to help improve people's lives. The British left could use the image of the fair-minded, liberal post-imperial Britain that they exalted to attack what they saw as a growing international problem of inequality based on 'race'. This chapter will first look at some of the more general statements that these groups made about 'race' and the problems of 'race' relations internationally before moving on to explore their particular concerns about two specific issues which dominated press and public discussions about international 'race' issues in the 1960s, those of apartheid in South Africa and the independence of Rhodesia.

Concerns about 'Race' and 'Racism' Abroad

As we saw in the previous chapter, concerns about injustice and inequality on the basis of 'race' was used by some members of CND, the AAM and the NUS to try and push the boundaries of their organisations. The leadership of CND, the AAM and the NUS began to take these concerns more seriously from the middle of the 1960s. This, it was argued, was due to the changing context of post-imperial Britain, which made it increasingly difficult to separate issues and instead saw a variety of issues as interconnected.

In the early 1960s CND's concerns about 'race' were most often discussed in terms of the wastage of resources. The first real indication of CND actively concerned about 'race' and inequality internationally occurred at the Easter march in 1963 when they asked supporters to 'bring with them a tin of dried milk' that would be given to War on Want to be shipped to Algeria.[6] Later that year Youth CND clarified their position, arguing that 'soldiering . . . [was] morally wrong and a waste of time and money' which they thought could be better spent 'to help fight the starvation, racial strife and misunderstandings in the world'.[7] In 1964 CND's argument that poverty led to war and was therefore an important issue for them was visible in the pages of *Sanity*. In an article in the October edition the editors of *Sanity* argued that 'all the world's "flashpoints" coincided with starving peoples'.[8] Many CND supporters believed that the general public were concerned about poverty around the world. They saw it as the job of CND to give this concern a political edge by linking it to nuclear weapons.[9] This link made it possible for the leadership to condone campaigning against poverty while maintaining their stance that CND was a single-issue campaign. Some activists tried to physically link the two issues. For example, they argued that military equipment at a base in Rosyth, Scotland should be altered 'to provide equipment, such as agricultural machinery, for underdeveloped countries'.[10] Planning for the 1965 Easter march took up this theme and tried to incorporate it into the march, arguing that CND 'should spell out the close connection between what CND feels about nuclear war, racialism and the brotherhood of man in terms of the fact that a world of peace is much more than simply a world without war'.[11] The link between war and poverty was firmly established within CND literature by the middle of the 1960s. Around 1965 CND began to speak about a 'new cold war' that was developing. As the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the West entered a period of détente, CND began to see that

'the threat of nuclear war now lies more in a clash between the coloured, hungry nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the white affluent countries, than in a conflict between America and Russia'.[12] From the middle of the 1960s the term 'new cold war' was common on the pages of *Sanity*. One CND supporter, Richard Hammersley, stated that this 'new cold war' was being built up between 'the white developed nations and the poor coloured nations', while John Gittings feared that British 'peacekeeping' forces were only helping to 'sharpen the already apparent division between rich-white and poor-non-white nations, which could lead to race war'.[13] While it was clear that Britain was one of the 'rich-white' nations, CND was trying to divorce Britain from the policies of these states and encourage post-imperial Britain to take up the case of the 'poor-non-white' nations to prevent conflict. In order to do this, however, they first had to ensure that their own supporters saw the connection between inequality and nuclear weapons and would make a strong stand against racial prejudice. To this end the editors asked readers of *Sanity* in 1966 to consider, 'is it right to condone racial prejudice – in Britain or in Africa? Which side are we on in the new cold war? Or in the race war that could follow?'[14] Malcolm Caldwell too saw Britain's ongoing relationship with the United States as interfering with Britain's path towards disarmament and, in effect, hurting countries in Africa and Asia.[15] While Caldwell and the editors of *Sanity* thought it was obvious that CND supporters would feel a sense of duty to help impoverished people around the world, Mervyn Jones acknowledged that this was partly the product of CND's social make-up. He pointed out that 'it is easy to be concerned about famine in India or apartheid in South Africa if you don't yourself need to worry about paying the rent and buying the Sunday joint'. CND therefore had to recognise that while 'the bomb, racial injustice, and world hunger are supremely important . . . they are not exclusively important'. CND had to take care not to alienate themselves from working-class Britons and highlight that inequality in Britain was intimately connected to inequality in the rest of the world.[16] In 1967 the editors of *Sanity* argued that 'the race against starvation is as terrible as the race for arms' and it was made clear to readers that 'if we do not end the arms race a lot of people in the underdeveloped countries will die very soon; if we do end it we shall save ourselves as well as them'.[17] They saw this salvation as both physical, by preventing war they would save lives, and moral. By helping people around the world they were promoting a more moral post-imperial Britain.

This link between war and poverty was also used by some people within CND to bring the focus of activists back to nuclear weapons.

The leadership was concerned that the attention of activists seemed to be straying away from nuclear weapons. Therefore, links were made between nuclear weapons and other issues in order to show supporters the continued importance of opposition to nuclear weapons. In 1967 the new chairman of CND, Sheila Oakes, wrote an appeal to campaigners in *Sanity* saying that

> we have to point out to those CNDers who have embarked on campaigns against child poverty, race discrimination, and for full comprehensive education, more houses and hospitals, more aid to under-developed countries and many other causes, that it cannot profit them to win their campaigns if we do not win ours.[18]

The language used by Oakes is informative. She acknowledges that she is talking about 'CNDers' who have taken up a variety of other issues, but then proceeds to take away their membership in CND talking about opposing nuclear weapons as 'our' campaign against 'their' multiple campaigns.

Oakes's plea does seem to have fallen on deaf ears as articles about international 'race' issues and poverty more generally within *Sanity* did not decrease but increased in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Malcolm Caldwell, who had long argued that CND should widen its campaign and argued for a recognition of the interconnection of issues such as poverty, racial discrimination and nuclear weapons, reminded readers of *Sanity* in 1968 that

> CND has stressed the shocking incongruity of colossal world 'defence' expenditures while so many social problems cry out for attention. We have also argued from historical experience that arms races end as wars – and, from a consideration of other evidence, that the present nuclear arms race is unlikely to prove an exception to this rule. But between world poverty and nuclear war there is a more direct connection. Stated baldly, it is that the rich nations are prepared to defend the present international share-out by every means at their disposal. Nuclear weapons are among the most effective in cancelling out the numerical advantage of the world's two billion or so have-nots.[19]

Caldwell argued that all Britons, regardless of their class, were 'rich' in comparison to others around the world. The distinction made earlier in the decade by Jones between CND's middle-class membership and

the concerns of the working class are here eroded. Mervyn Jones himself wrote a piece for *Sanity* in 1968 which saw all Britons as united by history, which shaped the way they saw 'race' both internationally and domestically. In the late 1960s the amnesia about Britain's imperial past was beginning to lift. However, as Schwarz argues, the empire is clearly seen as a historical construct.[20] Jones reminded readers of their imperial past saying,

> Britain is a nation that for over 300 years has asserted its superiority over Africans, Asians, and Amerindians: exploiting them economically, excluding them socially, holding them under arbitrary rule politically. It has never been considered, or at times it has been explicitly denied, that they are human beings like ourselves.

Jones argued that the empire clearly had an impact on the way that Britons saw immigrants from these states, but also impacted on their view of those less fortunate around the world. He argued there was a changing attitude to 'race' in Britain in the aftermath of Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech and the passing of the second Commonwealth Immigrants Act. He traced this change, saying that as recently as the year before people 'would have prevaricated before saying that Biafran children should starve to death', whereas by late 1968 they would not prevaricate.[21] For members of CND this meant they needed to work harder to show both their supporters and other Britons that there were compelling reasons to care about starving children in Biafra and around the world. As Reg Prentice argued in 1969, the growing gap 'between the living standards of the richer one-third of the world and the poorer two-thirds' was important to Britons because they had 'a compelling moral duty to help people poorer than ourselves' as well as because it would provide economic benefits in the long run and would further peace, which was good for everyone.[22] Jones's use of Britain's imperial past to promote international aid in the late 1960s is telling on several fronts. First, this is one of the first mentions of Britain's imperial past within the pages of *Sanity*. In the early 1960s amnesia about empire dominated within CND and the left more generally. There was a profound silence about this aspect of Britain's past. This silence clearly worked to distance the British people from their imperial past as they needed to be reminded about it. This distancing also meant that groups like CND were able to use references to empire to promote actions that were themselves imperial in ethos. A few short years before, this same action would have been undertaken by the 'benevolent' welfare empire and was now

seen strictly as the action of concerned 'aid' providers. CND were trying to create a post-imperial progressive British identity throughout the 1960s. In the first half of the decade this was done largely by creating a distance between imperial and modern Britain, and by 1968 the history of imperial Britain could be remembered as the foil against which to measure the progress of post-imperial modernity.

The AAM is itself perhaps the best example of the concerns of the British left about racial inequality internationally. Its entire reason for being was to oppose inequality on racial terms in South Africa and Southern Africa. In the early 1960s this was seen in relation to Angola and was expanded in the late 1960s to also cover Zambia.[23] In 1965 there was debate within the AAM regarding whether they should continue to work with Ghana in opposing South African apartheid given the human rights violations that were taking place within that country. In 1972 the AAM openly condemned the actions of the Ugandan government 'for its racially-inspired expulsion of Asian residents'.[24] At the end of the 1960s the AAM increasingly voiced their concerns about racial inequalities and the struggle for independence being waged in Portuguese colonies in Africa.[25] Even within an organisation created to oppose racial inequality abroad, by the late 1960s they needed to take a broader stance against inequality in several places.

As we saw in the previous chapter, throughout most of the 1960s the NUS was constrained by its constitution. But this did not prevent the NUS from taking a strong line on a number of international issues where they saw political or social problems affecting students. In fact, on many issues, including racial discrimination, it was much easier for the NUS to take a stand about international situations than those at home. The NUS ratified a new international policy in April 1958 which set down their 'desire to co-operate on a basis of equality with students in all parts of the world in practical activities' and affirmed their intention to 'take the strongest action possible to oppose any discrimination against a student on the grounds of his race, religion, class or political beliefs'.[26] Their opposition to unequal access to education based on 'race', colour, creed, politics or religion was repeated on a regular basis and formed an important part of the underlying ethos of the organisation.[27]

At their April 1960 council meeting the NUS discussed the demonstrations by 'coloured students in the Southern States of America' based on a report that they had received from the United States National Student Association (USNSA).[28] At the following council meeting NUS passed a resolution which applauded 'the action of coloured students in the

Southern States of the U.S.A. in their protests against discrimination on the grounds of colour in the education system of the Southern States' as well as congratulating those who supported them and demanded government action.[29] Discussion of these matters carried on the following year when the NUS clearly indicated its sympathy and support for students who were fighting for de-segregation in the United States, going so far as to send letters to President Kennedy demanding he take action and congratulating him on the attempts he had already made to eliminate racial discrimination in schools.[30] The NUS were particularly concerned about the case of James Meredith and passed a resolution in 1962

> reaffirming its [the NUS's] belief in the equality of opportunity in higher education regardless of race, creed or colour, Council strongly deplores the continuing practice of discrimination in higher education as recently evidenced by the incidents surrounding the admission of James Meredith in Mississippi University. Council instructs the Executive to make known to the appropriate authorities its abhorrence of such manifestations and further reiterates its support for the struggle being carried on by the U.S.N.S.A. and other bodies against segregation in higher education in the United States of America. Council congratulates the Federal Government of the U.S.A. on its firm stand on this issue.[31]

NUS councils continued to hear 'sad stories of racial segregation' from both the United States and South Africa through the 1960s and to reassert their opposition to racial discrimination.[32] The NUS council were pleased in 1965 when their executive met with Martin Luther King. This meeting was judged 'very timely and correct'.[33]

The NUS were concerned about 'race' and racial discrimination not just in the United States but around the world. For example, they were concerned about inequality and the suppression of student liberties in Iraq, Spain and Eastern Europe. In 1967 the civil war in Nigeria raised the concern of the NUS for Biafran students. At their November 1967 council meeting they passed a resolution regretting 'that Nigerian students were divided' as well as lamenting increasing racial discrimination in Britain, a subject to which we will return in the next chapter.[34] The change of the NUS constitution made it possible for them to take a stand in relation to the new immigration bill being discussed by the Conservative government in 1970, that 'we [the NUS] stand very firmly against racialism here and in the rest of the world. Students will judge this Government which theoretically agrees with them, on the decision

over arms to South Africa and the contents of the new Immigration Bill'.[35]

NICR movement activists, as discussed in the previous chapter, drew links and parallels between their campaign and others both at home and abroad. But the degree to which groups within the NICR movement vocalised their concern about people around the world varied. PD was particularly vocal that they were 'equally concerned at the lack of civil rights in other parts of the world'.[36] This concern was often directed at the Republic of Ireland where Northern Irish activists were keen to show there was inequality.[37] They also drew connections to Palestine and developed links with civil rights activists in the United States, which we will discuss in the following chapter. They also made connections between their own situation and those of other national minorities, including the Basque and Flemish. The CDU stated that they were concerned about the 'brutal suppression of Human Rights whether in Bruges, Leningrad, or Ulster'.[38] In 1970 NICRA discussed a motion in their national council saying that they would 'pledge solidarity to all people throughout the world to whom civil, national and human liberties are denied'.[39] In making these connections activists in Northern Ireland hoped that the international press and activists would pick up on their story and they would get more publicity. But they also hoped that the groups they supported would return the favour. In 1972 NICRA issued an

> appeal to the people and Governments of the world, and the international agencies and in particular to the people in the rest of Ireland and to British democracy, to put maximum pressure on the British people to end its policy of repression and grant our just demands.[40]

NICRA saw the international community as the best audience for its concerns, although it was still the 'British people' who held the power to make concrete changes in Northern Ireland. The concerns of the NICR movement with inequitable treatment abroad was partly self-serving, but was not only so. Instead, the concern of those who supported Northern Irish civil rights for movements against oppression around the world should be seen as the outcome of a genuine feeling of international citizenship. With the end of the British Empire they could make international connections more freely. The mistrust that many within the civil rights movement felt towards their own government in Stormont meant that they put much more hope and credit in states and peoples

abroad and were thus concerned that these people, to which they felt an affinity, were well treated.

Clearly members of CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement were all deeply concerned with inequalities, particularly those based on 'race', which they saw taking place around the world. Individual members were often concerned by events in specific locations, but there were two particular cases that drew the attention of activists in all of these organisations – South Africa and Rhodesia.

South Africa as the Epitome of Racism

Throughout the 1960s South Africa and its apartheid system was seen by the British left as the embodiment of a racist regime. This emphasis on South Africa showed itself in a desire to work with the AAM, as we saw in the previous chapter, but also rhetorically in concern for the people of South Africa. This section explores the ways in which organisations whose primary concern was not South Africa, mainly CND and the NUS, rather than the AAM itself, talked about the apartheid regime and used it to talk about 'race' and 'race relations' more broadly.[41]

In the early 1960s, as we saw in the previous chapter, CND struggled to work effectively with other organisations, including the AAM. CND supporters were certainly concerned about the situation in South Africa and many people were members of both CND and the AAM. However, the apartheid regime was discussed within CND circles first without reference to the AAM. The first mention of South Africa within CND's newspaper *Sanity* was in early 1963 in an article titled 'South Africa Prepares for Civil War'. It discussed the inequality of the apartheid regime and the actions that were taking place to oppose it.[42] No mention was made within this article of activities taking place in Britain to oppose the apartheid regime. However, on the following page of the newspaper there was an advertisement to join the AAM. This tells us a great deal about early CND, where issues of apartheid were seen as of great concern, yet the leadership maintained the policy of separating this issue from nuclear weapons. If CND members were interested in opposing apartheid they were encouraged to do so by joining another organisation rather than by trying to unite the issues within one organisation. The AAM were the subject of much more in-depth reporting within *Sanity* the following year when Tony McCarthy wrote an article describing the movement. This article on AAM was part of a series within *Sanity* on 'British movements of dissent'. McCarthy praised the AAM for 'creating a new public opinion on apartheid', but said that the movement to

boycott South African goods had failed to make any significant or long-term impact.[43] The tone of the article was one of detachment. While it was important that CND supporters knew what was taking place in other parts of the world and what other British activist organisations were doing, there was clearly a sense that this was a curiosity rather than of central importance to CND. In 1965 Mervyn Jones wrote two pieces for *Sanity* about South Africa based on a trip he made there. The first article, titled 'In darkest Africa', made the case for including this piece in *Sanity* because 'campaigners against the bomb are also likely to be campaigners against *apartheid*'.[44] However, the reaction that he, and *Sanity*, received after this piece required that he write a second article defending this statement. Jones maintained that CND supporters really should care about South Africa and that many really did, but the way that he had to set this out leaves a great deal of room for questioning this statement.[45]

Despite McCarthy's assertion that CND supporters cared about South Africa, there was very little discussion of South Africa and apartheid within *Sanity* during the rest of the 1960s. In the late 1960s and early 1970s there were large movements, like the Stop The Seventies Tour Campaign (STSTC), across Britain protesting tours of South African segregated sporting teams. Only in the wake of these movements were the pages of *Sanity* once again full of discussion about South Africa and racial discrimination. Mass opposition to these tours was used to discuss the types of tactics that CND should use as well as the extent to which a campaign about nuclear weapons should be concerned about racial discrimination.[46] In the early 1970s CND continued to see any potential British support for the South African apartheid regime as 'immoral', but their concern about the situation was not specifically because of their attitudes to 'race' and racial discrimination but was connected to their Cold War concerns.[47] When South Africa was excluded from the Commonwealth in 1961, CND's disquiet that the apartheid regime reflected badly on Britain and their moral, liberal identity was somewhat assuaged. Their concerns about 'race' and inequality were then transferred to other issues, including Vietnam and Rhodesia.

South Africa's apartheid regime was a major area of concern for the NUS throughout the 1960s despite the strictures of their constitution. It was relatively easy for those who wanted to discuss South Africa to connect the apartheid regime with inequality in access to education, enabling the NUS council to talk about it within the limits of Clause 3 of its constitution. It was common for representatives from the National

Union of South African Students (NUSAS), or overseas students from South Africa studying in Britain, to be present at NUS councils and to describe, sometimes in great detail, the situation for students there. In April 1958 Mr Adam Small, a student from South Africa studying at the LSE, gave the NUS council a vivid picture of what was happening in South Africa. He presented a detailed history of his country, focusing in particular on the multiracial nature of the citizenry, and highlighted the inequalities present in universities.[48] The level of detail in Mr Small's speech could indicate that the basic level of knowledge about South Africa within the NUS was quite low, or at least that he perceived it to be low. But the length of this speech, and the amount of time that he was allowed, also indicate the interest that this topic held for students present at the council. In April 1959 the NUS passed a resolution condemning the South African government's segregation of education. Introducing the motion, a delegate from Queen Mary College said that 'it had been a principle of democracy – a principle shared by the NUS – that all students, regardless of race, colour or creed, were entitled to a university education, if they were capable of qualifying for admission'.[49] The vice-president of the NUS, Mr Watson, agreed that 'it was terrible that students in South Africa should be faced with the separation of students according to their colour, and not their academic abilities' and 'hoped that a determined protest from students in this country might help to bring about the withdrawal of this Bill [Extension of University Education] by the South African Government'.[50] A resolution was then overwhelmingly passed which deplored 'the Apartheid policy of the South African Government with regard to higher education' and instructed both the executive and constituent unions to work to oppose the 'Extension of University Education' Bill.[51]

NUS statements about South Africa were often repeated and vary little throughout the decade.[52] The NUS criticised the South African government for increasing apartheid policies in higher education and confirmed their own 'opposition to segregation in all places of higher education', pledging themselves 'to the principle of equal opportunities of education for all human beings regardless of race, colour, creed, religion, political and other provisos'.[53] The NUS kept up with events in South Africa, often passing resolutions condemning new laws or the extension of laws which they thought inequitable and which seemed to bolster apartheid.[54] In 1967 the NUS offered their own headquarters at Endsleigh Street 'as a basis for NUSAS operations should that Union be banned from operating in its own country'.[55] From the early 1960s they also set out to use sports as a way of voicing their opposition, urging

'members of N.U.S. not to participate in events with South African teams which operate the colour bar'.[56] This was tested in 1963 when Oxford and Cambridge rugby teams accepted an invitation to play in South Africa. This was the subject of a resolution at the NUS council in April 1963 which asked the rugby teams not to participate.[57] At the following council meeting it was recorded that the Oxford and Cambridge rugby teams had paid little attention to this resolution or the letter sent by the NUS executive to which they had not replied.[58] Sporting events remained an important way of voicing opposition to apartheid and racial segregation. At the end of the 1960s the Springbok rugby team tour of the UK was the subject of many 'heated and lively moments in a debate which . . . spread over two days' at the November 1967 NUS council.[59]

In the middle of the 1960s the NUS tried to channel their opposition to apartheid into concrete ways of helping students from South Africa. This was particularly through scholarships to black South African students. There were concerns raised in 1963 that the scholarships offered by the British Council were not going to the right people and the executive pledged to look into it.[60] At the same council a resolution was 'enthusiastically' passed reaffirming the NUS's support for the NUSAS and recognising that 'the most effective way in which the National Union can materially assist coloured South African students is through wholehearted support of S.A.C.H.E.D. [South African Committee for Higher Education] and the N.U.S.A.S. scholarship scheme' and therefore welcomed the setting up of a centralised scholarship committee in Britain for black South Africans.[61]

The situation in South Africa was also used by many people within the NUS to test and push the boundaries of the NUS constitution. Many of the substantive discussions about South Africa's apartheid regime began with debate about the NUS constitution. The vast majority of resolutions about South Africa ended up being withdrawn as they were seen to contravene Clause 3 of the constitution. Sometimes visitors from overseas were used to try and guilt the NUS council and executive into amending Clause 3. For example, in 1967 a representative from Ghana showed his concern that 'African students would not expect British students to remain neutral on matters affecting the racial problems in South Africa'.[62] While the NUS had not stayed 'neutral' on racial discrimination in South Africa, the constitutional limit that they could only pass resolutions about apartheid impact on *education* was in the crosshairs here. The limits of the constitution did not stop the NUS from continuing to pledge its support for the NUSAS and to do what it could

to oppose apartheid in education.[63] Some of these speeches ended in 'thunderous and prolonged applause', both for the speaker and for the work of the NUSAS more generally.[64] The November 1967 council meeting was scheduled for the same weekend as a major national demonstration against a tour by the South African rugby team and it was discussed at the meeting if they should suspend the gathering to attend the demonstration at Twickenham.[65] Instead of cancelling the entire conference it was decided to send two representatives, including the president-elect, Jack Straw.

When the NUS changed their constitution in 1969 they could, and did, become increasingly vocal about their opposition to apartheid. In April 1969, at the first council after the change of constitution, the NUS condemned the South African government for arresting student protestors.[66] In 1970 the NUS followed this up with firm strictures on their own constituent members saying that the NUS 'condemns all institutes of higher education which continue to purchase branded South African commodities and it condemns all students who consume such commodities'.[67] That year they also passed a very long and comprehensive resolution condemning apartheid in South Africa. They reiterated once again their complete opposition to the 'racialist regime' of South Africa, amongst others. They were also able to support political movements in South Africa which opposed apartheid, saying that 'racialism in Southern Africa can only be opposed in its political context and that the African people are faced with a situation where their freedom can only be achieved by the liberation movements which are fighting on their behalf'.[68]

Concern about 'race' and racial discrimination abroad was strong in the NUS. The constitutional wrangles of the organisation throughout the 1960s were deeply interlinked with their stance on South Africa with each issue used to transform opinion about the other. For both the NUS and CND the apartheid regime in South Africa was simply wrong. There was no debate on this front, only about what they could or should do to oppose and undermine it. But the situation in South Africa predated all of these organisations and so, in some ways, was an existing problem that should be opposed but was recognised as a long-standing and difficult situation to change. As we saw in Chapter 3, South Africa was often seen as one of the 'new' empires taking over for Britain. Opposition to the apartheid regime in South Africa therefore fit neatly into the attitudes of these organisations against imperialism in general and their desire to create a progressive, modern post-imperial Britain. The situation in Rhodesia, on the other hand, was unfolding in

the middle of the 1960s and was more difficult to distance from Britain as it was. Creating a progressive and modern post-imperial Britain in relation to Rhodesia was quite a bit more complicated. Each of these organisations were interested in the situation in Rhodesia as a good opportunity for Britain to show the positive difference it could make as a post-imperial state.

Rhodesia

As we saw in the first part of this book, the situation in Rhodesia became a major concern both in the wider public and amongst CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement with Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence for the country in November 1965. For many on the left Smith's UDI provided a particular conundrum, as doing nothing would, in effect, be supporting a racist regime and discussion of doing 'something' quickly descended into talk of military intervention. This was particularly the case for CND. Before UDI they advocated that the British government take a 'tough' line with Ian Smith, fearing that Smith would perceive Wilson's coming to power as a chance to challenge British authority and resolve.[69] While CND might have been correct on this point, Smith's UDI certainly did not end CND's concerns about the situation in Rhodesia or what the British government should be doing about it. CND found in Rhodesia what they had been concerned about since the early 1960s. As the front page of *Sanity* said in December 1965, 'behind the Rhodesian crisis is the threat of race war in Africa. Behind race war in Africa looms the dreadful shadow of global race war. And waiting for that war, are, among other monstrosities, nuclear weapons.'[70] This was why CND needed to be concerned about Rhodesia. The situation in Rhodesia fit very well into CND's assessment of the 'new cold war' which pitted the rich-white nations against the poor-black nations. CND urged Wilson to take 'decisive and immediate steps to avert catastrophe' and asked local CND groups to press their MPs 'to demand British action in support of all economic sanctions agreed by [the] UN, particularly oil sanctions'.[71] In the same edition of *Sanity* was a piece by Terence Heelas which strongly advocated the use of force to create an equitable regime in Rhodesia. Heelas argued that Britain was

> broadly divided between those who believe that we should put the interests of our own 'kith and kin' (the somewhat old-fashioned terminology is revealing) above those of illiterate and 'irresponsible'

> Africans, and those who believe that the principle of self-determination – through enfranchisement – of subject peoples must be upheld. I do not imagine that any CND supporter could be found among the ranks of the white-supremacists . . . If it [Britain] refuses to use force against the Smith regime (assuming that all other methods of coercion fail) it can only be because the Government is unwilling to use the final sanction of force against our 'kith and kin' while continuing to sanction the use of force against 'lesser breeds without the law'. If we, as individuals, support Mr. Wilson (or his successor) in refusing to envisage the use of force in Rhodesia, we must contribute – however reluctantly – to the sum of those who oppose the use of force for less honourable reasons. We shall, in effect, be rowing in the same boat as the Marquis of Salisbury and the tatty-minded supporters of white supremacy abroad and 'anti-wog' legislation at home.[72]

By this logic CND had to sacrifice its core principle of pacifism in order to ensure that they were not supporting racial supremacy. Advocating the use of force was never going to be easy within CND circles, and doing so in order to oppose racism shows just how strongly many within CND felt about racial inequality and discrimination. There was debate within CND about the extent to which Rhodesia was the responsibility of the British government alone, or the Commonwealth more generally, but it was agreed that 'two illegitimate regimes now exist in Southern Africa fathered by Britain', and so it was up to the British government and CND as a British organisation to take a stand for equality.[73] For CND the white supremacist regime in Rhodesia and the inability of the Wilson government to do anything about it was threatening Britain's good name and moral authority as a post-imperial great power.

For the AAM, too, the situation in Rhodesia brought to the fore racial discrimination around the world. For the AAM Rhodesian UDI showed that they were 'working in an environment of growing racial tension everywhere'.[74] While the AAM may have made some progress in the UK in convincing people that the apartheid regime in South Africa needed to be opposed, they felt that South Africa's 'organised system of race oppression' was contagious and spreading.[75] Like CND the AAM were critical of the Wilson government's handling of Rhodesia, saying that Wilson's inaction was in fact 'displaying discrimination against African Governments'. They were critical of the 'racialist overtones' of the

Wilson government.[76] The AAM therefore extended its work to include activity against Smith's racist regime in Rhodesia and other emerging racist regimes in Southern Africa.[77]

For the NUS problems in Rhodesia were not simply the result of Smith's UDI. They had been concerned about the direction that Rhodesia was taking for many years. In 1961 the NUS executive had reported to council on the increasing segregation in Rhodesia and 'felt there was in some ways a growing similarity with the situation in S[outh] Africa'. They argued that this 'should be nipped in the bud' by asking the British government to do something as they 'had a moral responsibility for protectorates', of which Rhodesia was still one.[78] In the early 1960s the NUS passed resolutions against segregation in Rhodesian higher education very similar to those about South Africa. They also used the situation in Rhodesia to push the boundaries of the NUS constitution.[79] In the wake of the UDI the NUS continued to encourage graduates to go to the country as part of the 'Graduate Service Overseas' and saw the Smith regime's desire to keep these students out as a good indication that previous volunteers had done good work in opposing racial discrimination.[80] They also advocated that the British government do whatever was needed, including the use of force, to make the Rhodesian regime more equitable. NUS council instructed the executive 'to urge the British Government to uphold its responsibilities in Rhodesia, thereby correcting . . . grave injustices against staff and students of educational institutions'.[81] British military intervention would mean that Rhodesia was no longer independent but, the NUS argued, would undertake the 'restoration of legality'.[82] This is a somewhat incongruous position to take for an organisation that had strongly advocated independence and an end to imperialism. Despite this, NUS members called 'on the British Government to uphold its responsibilities' in Rhodesia as the 'British Government obviously bore the whole moral and legal responsibility for ending UDI'.[83]

During the late 1960s and early 1970s the NUS became increasingly radical in their demands for British action in Rhodesia. Rhodesia remained at the centre of debates within the NUS about what their role should be with some 'disgusted' that Rhodesia was used 'as an excuse for militancy in the NUS'.[84] The NUS did agree, in 1966, to stop using the term 'Rhodesia' and instead to call the state Zimbabwe as the majority of its inhabitants wanted. The NUS also agreed to condemn the racialism and discrimination that existed within Rhodesia and to call on the British government to do something substantial about the situation.[85]

In 1970 the NUS executive was proud that one of its numbers, Tony Klug, the deputy president in 1970, was banned from Rhodesia without ever having visited the state. They took this as a sign of the 'effectiveness of NUS policies and action' in combatting racialism in both Rhodesia and South Africa.[86] NUS policy, by the early 1970s, was clear. Council agreed that the NUS 'must, as a major priority of this Union, do everything within our power to stop the British Government shoring up the rule of a handful of – a minority of white settlers in Rhodesia'. To this end the NUS recommended that all of their members join the AAM, saying that it 'needs every support it can get'.[87] Smith's declaration of UDI gave the left an opportunity to show their opposition to racial discrimination. Members of each of these groups were willing to sacrifice deeply held beliefs, their pacifism and anti-imperialism, to argue that the British government needed to show its opposition to inequality on the basis of 'race'. Unfortunately, the Wilson government's failure to follow their demands for action further reinforced their cynicism and disillusionment with his government. The view of post-imperial Britain that was put forward in relation to Rhodesia was a rather interventionist one, but it did uphold the principles of equality and fairness regardless of 'race'.

Out of Step with the British People?

In the early 1960s there was a clear sense within CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement that they were on the side of 'right', concerned as they were with equality and fairness. These groups also believed that they were leading the British public in a progressive direction, which people would follow if only they had the right information and understanding. However, this confidence was increasingly questioned as the decade progressed. As we saw in Chapter 5, there was a growing concern that it was not just a matter of informing the British public about what was taking place in other parts of the world, but about changing opinions, or, even worse, convincing people to care. This was particularly the case when it came to concerns about racial injustice and discrimination abroad. Each of these organisations felt themselves to be increasingly out of touch with the majority opinion, which seemed to be moving away from their British ideal of liberalism and racial equality. This concern surfaced in the second half of the 1960s. This was true both in terms of their concerns about 'race' and their wider concerns about people and issues around the world. In 1966 CND were angered by the

message they saw from both sides of the election campaign. According to *Sanity*,

> while the peoples of two continents face famine, while a cruel war is waged [in Vietnam], while poor nations grow poorer and rich ones richer, we in this tight little island have been asked to vote for affluence and the pound. We have been told unblushingly by both parties to make our crosses for cash.[88]

CND feared that they were fighting a losing battle against this self-interested concern and insularity. Each of these organisations were concerned that for some people post-imperial Britain meant a retreat into insularity rather than being a progressive and involved international force. CND supporters argued that this withdrawal was not the natural state of affairs for the British people. According to Mervyn Jones, 'the majority of British people are believers neither in racial oppression nor in racial equality . . . they are uneasy, a little guilty, reluctant to stick their necks out'. It was therefore up to people on the left, like those who supported CND, to 'win over this middle ground' to equality. Yet, Jones too was concerned that the trend was in the wrong direction, as 'intolerance is becoming normal [and] . . . tolerance is becoming eccentric, an oddity which the prudent man will shun'.[89] CND remained hopeful at the end of the 1960s, arguing that the 1968 Easter march showed 'a vivid public expression' of the 'widespread mood in the country' which, they argued, included 'horror [with] the rise of race discrimination'.[90] Yet, by the end of the 1960s CND's membership had decreased significantly and the numbers attending their Easter march were radically decreased. The extent to which this was truly representative of a 'widespread mood' is therefore somewhat questionable.

The NUS too had noticed that the general mood of the country was not behind them and their stance on 'race' relations. In fact, they were growing concerned that their own members were losing interest in international affairs in the early 1970s. In 1970 Tony Klug, who was responsible for the international affairs department, complained that his department was facing major problems of communications with the membership. Although they had begun to send out an international bulletin with each mailing, he still did not have an adequate base of support in individuals, unions of 'people ready, willing and able to be mobilised on specific issues at short notice'.[91] The NUS's ability to make their voice heard on international issues was therefore

circumscribed. The following year Klug once again complained about the situation in the international department saying that the difficultly was that the 'NUS lacked almost in entirety any international policy', and there was an issue 'getting the international department over to the membership'. This, Klug thought, was because 'people did not appear to be interested'.[92] Thus, while the NUS had broadened out the remit of their activity in 1969, this had not been accompanied by specific policies and, even more importantly, the general membership did not seem interested enough in international affairs to press for such a policy. One way the executive attempted to tackle this was by setting up 'twinning arrangements' between constituent organisations of the NUS and counterparts in other countries. This, it was hoped, would 'create an international consciousness'.[93] Given the extent to which 'student activism' of 1968, only three years previously, was seen as an international movement, it is surprising that Britain's largest student organisation found in 1971 that members were simply not interested in international issues. There was a growing concern throughout each of these groups that they were no longer on the cutting edge of the British radical left nor appealing to the majority of Britons. It appeared that their vision of post-imperial Britain was not being taken up in the way that they had expected.

Conclusion

'Race' was an important topic in postwar Britain. The popular memory of the war was that Britain had defeated a madman bent on the extermination of entire 'races' of people. The idea of different 'races' of people was being undermined at the international level by organisations like UNESCO. The British Empire was also undergoing a transition, moving from a benevolent 'people's empire' unified across racial and cultural lines towards a 'family' of nations in the Commonwealth. These organisations believed that Britain's position as head of the Commonwealth and, increasingly, a post-imperial power meant that it had an important role in promoting equality around the world. Each of these groups firmly believed in equality and was deeply concerned about parts of the world, particularly South Africa and Rhodesia, where groups of people were clearly being discriminated against because of their 'race'. Unfortunately, by the late 1960s these organisations were beginning to feel that they were out of step with the majority of the British public. They were concerned that with the end of empire some people were retreating to focus solely on domestic issues rather than being

internationally minded. It was not international issues of racial equality but those within the domestic field that were the subject of large and growing public concern. Issues that had previously been confined to the empire, namely relations between different 'races' of people, increasingly came 'home' in the 1950s and 1960s, forcing the left to take a position on 'race' relations. This was not always easy for CND, the AAM, the NUS or the NICR movement, as we will see in the final chapter.

9
Addressing 'Race' in Britain

The story of 'race' and racism in Britain in the 1960s is well known. The source of racist ideas is disputed as is the impetus for legislation to limit immigration from Britain's former colonies.[1] While immigrants from Britain's colonies and former colonies were not the largest group in the postwar period, they garnered the most media coverage and elicited the strongest reactions from the governmental and public arenas.[2] The apparent 'influx' of 'New Commonwealth' immigrants into Britain from the late 1940s was, for many people, the most obvious sign of the end of empire. To those on the political right, it was now Britain itself that was being 'colonised'.[3] The hostility that 'non-white' people faced in 1960s Britain is well documented.[4] There is also a high degree of consensus that the majority of this racism came from, or was displayed by, the working class. The working class, it is argued, felt under threat by increasing migration as they were forced to share neighbourhoods and compete for housing and jobs with those newly arrived.[5] But this debate in itself replicates one of the key tropes of the period – that the terms 'immigrant' and 'non-white' could be used interchangeably.[6] This is erroneous on several counts, but does two things which are particularly problematic to the course of the debate. First, as Kathleen Paul has shown, using the terminology of 'immigrants' to describe those who were, or continued to be in the early 1960s, members of the empire and Commonwealth robs people of their connection to, and rights within, the United Kingdom.[7] Second, the conflation of the terms 'immigrant' and 'black' perpetuates the notion that Britain was 'white' before the postwar period and sets up a dichotomy between the 'white' British people and 'non-white' immigrants.[8]

While discussion of working-class racism looms large in this debate, the middle class seems to disappear. It may be true that in the main the

working class was more racist than the middle class, but there has never been research conducted that would demonstrate this. The evidence has shown that members of the working class were more likely to vote for far-right parties and it was the working class in the main who marched in support of Enoch Powell in 1968.[9] This is evidence of working-class racism rather than middle-class anti-racism. Middle-class anti-racism has often been assumed and has therefore produced very little interest or examination. It is true that there is little direct evidence of middle-class racism, but this does not necessarily mean that the middle classes were not struggling to come to terms with Britain as a multiracial society. This chapter explores how members of the middle class who were involved in radical left-wing activity thought about and responded to the creation of a multiracial Britain in this period. The view of post-imperial Britain that they put forward was largely an outward-looking or international idea. Their altruism in promoting such an inclusive, progressive, modern and equal post-imperial Britain did not always conform to their vision of their own home and the ways in which it was becoming increasingly diverse. From all of the evidence available it is clear that members of all of these groups opposed discrimination on racial and other grounds. But the story of how the radical left incorporated ideas of 'race' into their work is not so simple. It is one thing to oppose an inequitable system happening 'out there' in a faraway society and quite another to embrace the idea that your own ideas and life need to change.

CND and the Struggle against Silence

CND was certainly concerned about inequality. However, as we have seen in the previous two chapters, for most of the 1960s CND conceived of itself as a single-issue campaign and therefore was only concerned about issues which were directly linked to nuclear weapons or nuclear war. Issues deemed domestic politics went beyond what most people in CND were willing to campaign about for most of the decade. The main CND attitude towards racial issues in Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s was one of disinterest and silence. In 1960 when the South African cricket team came to Britain on a tour CND would not support the demonstration organised to meet them. It was taking place during their annual Aldermaston March and the CND leadership thought 'it did not seem wise to combine two campaigns on the same day'.[10] CND did not take on board the AAM's argument that the apartheid system was a threat to world peace. The AAM was even prevented from selling pledges as part of their 'Pennies against Apartheid' campaign at a

CND meeting in Central Hall in 1960.[11] In fact, throughout most of the 1960s CND had nothing to say about 'race' or racism in Britain, despite it being on the front page of most newspapers at several points in these years. During these years there were extensive 'race riots' in Nottingham and Notting Hill, Oswald Mosley attempted to make a comeback in national politics on the platform of opposition to 'New Commonwealth' immigration, there were ongoing discussions in political and press circles about colour bars and the first Commonwealth Immigrants Act was debated in parliament.[12] These issues did not even register as a point of discussion in CND's national co-ordinating committee or executive committee meetings. This does not, however, indicate that all of those who supported CND were disinterested in issues of 'race' and racism in Britain. The argument was that if CND supporters worked on issues of 'race' and racism they should do so outside of CND. In 1967 then chairman of CND Olive Gibbs was arrested with five others for picketing a hairdresser's shop in Oxford that practiced a colour bar. This action was reported in *Sanity*, but was not commented upon by the organisation itself.[13] There was also an expectation that CND supporters were concerned about racial issues as they sometimes surfaced in comedic elements of *Sanity*. The front cover of the January 1969 issue of *Sanity* showed two black children knocking on the door of 10 Downing street. They each wore a sign around their necks, one saying 'Commonwealth Conference Biafra' and the second 'Rhodesia'. The caption of the photograph read, 'My God! How did you get passes?', commenting on the government policy of refusing entry visas and curtailing immigration from both states.[14] In the same issue Peggy Duff wrote a satirical almanac in which she poked fun at Enoch Powell and his ideas of repatriation. For June she predicted, 'Enoch Powell demands repatriation of frogs. RSPCA protests', for July, 'Enoch Powell demands repatriation of locusts. Nasser and the Council for the Preservation of Rural England protest', and for August, 'Enoch Powell demands repatriation of tourists. Board of Trade protests'.[15] There was clearly an interest in 'race' issues within the membership of CND, even if it was not reflected in the policies of the organisation.

Clearly by the mid-1960s it was becoming difficult for CND to ignore issues of 'race' and racism within Britain. Increasingly issues of 'race' and racial discrimination abroad were being linked to domestic issues, making it more difficult for CND to separate the two. This came to a head in 1965 with Smith's Rhodesian UDI, as we saw in the previous chapter. In the middle of the decade CND was beginning to take a public stance on the issue of 'race'. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Martin Luther King

Jr travelled through London on his way to collect his Nobel Peace Prize in 1965. He met with leaders of Britain's immigrant communities and participated in a programme of meetings set up by CND and Christian Action.[16] Yet, CND itself did not talk to these immigrant organisations or set up any joint actions, activities or meetings with them. Changes within CND towards issues of 'race' were not due to a new sensibility about the issues. Instead they were the result of a recognition of the importance of 'race' on the international stage and, in particular, for Britain's international reputation. In the autumn of 1965 the editors of *Sanity* complained about the Home Secretary, Sir Frank Soskice, refusing visas to three people from Vietnam, saying that his 'sordid attitude to coloured immigrants has defamed the name of Britain'.[17] In the same issue of *Sanity* Malcolm Caldwell argued that there was a strong link between the attitudes of the British government towards the Far East and their concern about immigration at home. He argued that CND needed to work to 'reverse the policies of Commonwealth immigration restriction' because they 'betray an attitude of mind among our leaders which is bound to lead them into folly and worse "East of Suez" '.[18] Caldwell did not state exactly what this 'attitude of mind' was, but we can infer that he was referring to an old imperial mindset of white racial superiority, such as that discussed by Schwarz.[19] What links foreign policy in Asia and attitudes to immigrants in Britain is a racial stereotyping of the 'non-white other'. This was clear in 1966 when CND reacted to the Labour Party's White Paper on immigration. CND argued that the white paper was 'known in wider circles as the "Sorry No Coloured Paper" '.[20] Mervyn Jones was highly critical of the White Paper's emphasis on skin colour and thought that it would undermine the Commonwealth, which was the only organisation 'which includes the white and the coloured, the rich and the poor, and does not include either of the dominating super-powers'.[21] As discussed in Chapter 3, CND saw the Commonwealth as the key to Britain's renewed world status and their leadership of this organisation was a key component of the post-imperial foreign policy CND advocated.

The issue of 'race' and immigration into Britain once again dominated public debate in 1968 when Asians were expelled from Kenya by Jomo Kenyatta and looked to use their British passports to enter Britain. This threatened an 'influx' of thousands of people and prompted Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech and the second Commonwealth Immigration and Race Relations Acts.[22] Yet, CND continued to have nothing specific to say about 'race' in Britain. CND saw itself as fundamentally opposed to racism and applauded such attitudes in their

supporters. In 1968 a young boy was praised in the pages of *Sanity* for saying he felt 'very strong about the abolition of the bomb' and was an 'extreme anti-racialist'.[23] Yet CND itself failed to take a stand against racial discrimination. There was still a push from some CND members for the organisation into taking a stand on 'race', but with limited success. In the summer of 1968 Mervyn Jones wrote a long piece for *Sanity* about 'race' and racialism in Britain. He argued that the word 'race' was 'meaningless' and was concerned that 'its very use is a concession to the racialist at the outset'. Yet, even Jones thought that 'race' was not an appropriate topic for CND as it 'got in our way when we ought to be talking about peace, international security, [and] social change'. Racial discrimination, he argued, was both 'a horror . . . [and] a bore'.[24] This article is one of the few to mention Enoch Powell or his 'Rivers of Blood' speech in *Sanity*. Jones dismissed the idea that it 'caused or even much increased' racial prejudice, which he thought was the legacy of empire.[25] According to Jones, Powell had given these attitudes respectability but they were not, in themselves, new. And they were not issues on which CND should be focusing. Instead, they were simply a distraction from the real work of opposing nuclear weapons.

The shift in CND's overt concern regarding racial discrimination in Britain can be seen when comparing the South African cricket tour in 1960 mentioned above to the rugby tour scheduled for 1970. There were strong arguments made within the pages of *Sanity* that CND should participate in the Stop the Seventies Tour demonstrations.[26] A former CND supporter wrote in to *Sanity* to encourage CND members to take part in the demonstrations. Michael Craft said he had 'parted company with CND on the very question of the relationship that it should have towards other major issues – such as Race'. He was now rejoining CND to encourage CND and its supporters to see the interconnection of issues, including nuclear disarmament, housing, schools, racialism and British neo-colonialism. The Stop the Seventies Tour campaign, Craft argued, was about 'the stinking mess of racialism in Britain today – the violence of our own contemporary society'.[27] According to this line of argument, if CND was going to effectively oppose war and nuclear weapons, they also had to support anti-racialist activity. No longer could they go on pretending issues outside nuclear weapons had no bearing on them. While CND continued to try and keep their main focus on nuclear weapons, they had come to realise by the early 1970s that they would be entirely sidelined and ignored if they continued to have nothing to say about 'race', racism or immigration. It was clearly an issue that both their supporters and their potential supporters were interested in

and which was ignored at the peril of the organisation, which saw its membership stay at very low levels during the rest of the 1970s.

The AAM and the Recognition of 'Race' in Britain

The AAM was created to combat racial discrimination. It, more than any other group, should therefore be attuned to racialism and racial discrimination. Yet, during the early 1960s this was not the case regarding racial discrimination in Britain. For the first three years of their existence the AAM was so focused on racism and discrimination in South Africa that they ignored these attitudes within Britain. For the AAM racism and discrimination were things that happened 'out there' in South Africa. The AAM, like CND, tried in the early 1960s to stay 'single issue' and maintain their focus on South Africa. The executive were concerned that local groups were being distracted from work on South Africa by 'race', immigration and racial discrimination at home. This was evident in their discussions about the 'range of local Anti-Apartheid committee work' in the early 1960s.[28] In July 1961 it was decided that

> in the next *Bulletin* [the newspaper of the AAM] Committees should be informed that other aspects of work in Africa are being carried on by other organisations, and if supporters are interested would they please write to us and we would put them in touch with them.

It was agreed that because this was 'a matter of principle' the AAM's attitude to racial discrimination in Britain should be discussed at the next national committee meeting. Unfortunately, it was not discussed further.[29] Like CND, in the early 1960s the prevailing attitude within the AAM towards 'race' issues in Britain was silence.

This began to change in the middle of the decade. From early 1963 the AAM began to acknowledge a connection between racial discrimination in South Africa and that in Britain. Yet, this shift was not smooth or uncontested. Early in 1963 the executive decided to funnel some of the proceeds from their screenings of the film *Let My People Go* towards the film committee. *Let My People Go* was made by John Kirsh in 1961 and depicted apartheid South Africa, telling the story of some of those who escaped. Funds from showing this film would be used 'to make a film on Racialism in Britain'.[30] Yet, the following year when the AAM recorded that screenings of *Let My People Go* had made the committee £150, the attitude of the AAM executive had changed. The discussion at their meeting in April 1964 was recorded as follows:

> Question of leaving £100 with Contemporary Films raised, to be used for financing film on racial problems in this country, which could bring in question of S.A. This would be investment as it would bring back money in due course. Agreed not to go ahead with this.[31]

It is unclear from these minutes why it was agreed not to go ahead with a film about racial problems in Britain. There are, however, two significant points that are clear. First, the AAM increasingly saw racial discrimination in Britain as something that they should be interested in and should be doing something about, even if just raising awareness. Second, they continued to see this as of secondary importance to their work on South Africa. Even a film on 'racial problems' in Britain was to be used to initiate discussion on the apartheid system in South Africa.

In the middle of the 1960s the AAM was moving toward more action on racial discrimination in Britain. They were working with a variety of other groups and participating in initiatives to combat racism in Britain. In February 1963 a representative of the AAM attended a conference set up by the Fabian society on 'Integration and Immigration'. A few months later a representative from AAM met Lord Lansdowne, a Conservative peer, regarding the rights of asylum for refugees in Britain. They agreed to examine the matter further and give it 'maximum publicity'.[32] This increased participation with other groups gathered pace in 1965. That summer the AAM organised a summer school with the MCF on 'Race Relations' in the run-up to the enactment of the first Race Relations Act in December.[33] When setting up a boycott of segregated cricket matches later in 1965, the AAM approached the Standing Conference of West Indian organisation, which was the first time they had approached an organisation which represented 'non-white' people and was not specifically tied to South Africa.[34] For the first time, in 1965 the AAM clearly linked South African apartheid to issues of immigration in Britain. They set out a six-point plan for future work, including fighting the Wilson government's 'present retreat on apartheid issues and on immigration'.[35] The AAM continued to be concerned about what the British government was doing about racism and participated in the setting up of the UK Committee on Human Rights in 1967.[36] The AAM also invited the West Indian Standing Conference, the Indian Workers Association (IWA) and the Campaign against Racial Discrimination (CARD) to their 1967 national conference. By the end of 1967 the AAM Executive set out to review the publicity of the organisation to 'find ways in which to link the racial issues here and in Southern Africa'.[37] The AAM

were making a substantial effort to show the connection between their activity on South Africa and that of other groups working on racial discrimination in Britain. This was a distinctly different attitude from that of the AAM executive at the beginning of the decade.

A shift in the prioritisation of AAM policy about racism in Britain occurred in 1968. Instead of using awareness of racial issues in Britain in order to boost understanding and concern about apartheid in South Africa, the AAM now began to do the opposite. The AAM used their press release on the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre that year to express 'the hope that the British Government would "not only do all in its power to end racial discrimination in this country, but also lend its support and influence to those seeking to end racial discrimination in Southern Africa" '.[38] The truly galvanising moment for the AAM was the passing of the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. In their annual report that year they highlighted the importance of this bill in forcing them to act on racial discrimination in Britain, saying,

> the Anti-Apartheid Movement is primarily concerned with apartheid and race oppression in Southern Africa. It opposes minority rule and supports the African liberation movements in their struggle for freedom. But the Movement cannot ignore racialism in this country. When the Commonwealth Immigrants Act wrote into the statute book the sort of racialist discrimination that is prominent in South African law, the Movement spoke out.[39]

This Bill also encouraged the AAM to rethink the editorial policy of their newspaper and allow it to become involved 'to some degree in British racial problems'. Although this decision had been taken at the end of 1967, the first foray of the paper into this area was about the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Bill. Subsequently, the paper 'carried news and comment on the disruptions in the wake of Enoch Powell's inflammatory racial speeches'. Despite this new latitude for the paper, the objective remained 'to arrest any feeling there might be in this country that local problems supersede the need for work on Southern Africa'.[40] South Africa and Rhodesia were to remain the primary areas of concern, but there was much more acceptance by the AAM leadership that this could not be addressed in isolation from issues of 'race' discrimination in Britain.

By the end of the 1960s the AAM believed that racism in Britain was growing. The growth of the National Front, set up in 1967, and Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech seemed to prove this. The AAM

saw the government's failure in Rhodesia and 'the growth of Powellism and domestic race problems' as handicapping the work of their regional groups.[41] In 1970 the AAM were concerned that the proposed all-white South African cricket tour of Britain would 'cause a sharp deterioration' in local 'race' relations. They asked the government to cancel the tour because of the damage that it would do to 'community relations'.[42] Whereas AAM protests against segregated sporting tours in the early 1960s had focused solely on the injury it did to people in South Africa, they were now concerned about the impact of these tours in encouraging racism against people in Britain. In the lead-up to the first cricket match of the 1969 South African tour the AAM wrote a letter to Lords cricket ground emphasising 'the insult to the black citizens of this country' posed by the tour and argued that it threatened the continuance of the Commonwealth Games.[43] The AAM succeeded in having the tour cancelled, which they attributed to 'concern at deteriorating race relations in this country' as well as the 'revulsion against all aspects of racism and apartheid which was becoming the overriding concern of vast numbers of people in this country'.[44]

The AAM had a complicated and sometimes contradictory approach to racial discrimination in Britain. Initially they either did not believe that such a problem existed or saw it as beyond the scope of the organisation. Increasingly through the 1960s they could not ignore the interest of their supporters in 'race' issues in Britain. They oscillated between seeing work on racial discrimination in Britain as a distraction or as a means of drawing in more supporters. Sometimes these two views were held simultaneously. While they tried to keep the primary focus of the organisation and its local groups on South Africa throughout the 1960s, by the end of the decade deteriorating 'race' relations in Britain were making that difficult. This was due both to the success of groups like the National Front and to the AAM's own success in bringing issues of racial inequality into public debate. By the end of the 1960s the AAM could count on the majority of Britons knowing about the apartheid system. They no longer had to run an education programme, at least not to the same degree, and could use this knowledge of apartheid to draw parallels with other instances of inequality and discrimination based on 'race'.

The NUS and Anti-racist Activity

The NUS was much more proactive than either CND or the AAM in addressing issues of 'race' and racial discrimination in Britain in the

late 1950s and early 1960s. One explanation for this attitude could be the large involvement of students from around the world in NUS work. Overseas students at member institutions were members of the NUS in the same way as 'home' students, and a number of them became actively involved in the work of the local and national student unions. While the NUS was concerned about the situation and experience of all overseas students, and took up particular cases of students from Cyprus and China, their discussions of overseas students quickly turn into discussions of racial discrimination.[45]

As we have seen the NUS was emphatically against discrimination on any grounds, not least that of 'race'. In 1958, in the aftermath of 'race riots' in Nottingham and Notting Hill, a motion was passed at council which called upon 'all constituent Organisations actively to oppose any form of racial or colour discrimination where it affects the students community'.[46] The only concern voiced about this motion was that it did not go far enough. The delegate from Nottingham University, Mr A. Burkett, argued that 'all discrimination affected students'. He had been, he said, deeply disturbed by the riots in Nottingham that summer and differentiated the student population from that of the wider city. At the university, he said, they had an 'excellent scheme . . . for incorporating overseas students into the life of the Union', which included their large lake on campus 'into which they intended to throw any student or lecturer who displayed any racial discrimination of any kind'.[47] The delegate from the LSE, Mr P. Kapadia, argued that 'by and large it was true to say that the student community in this country was not prepared to tolerate discrimination whether it affected them or not'.[48] The vice-president of the NUS, Mr D. Grennan, concurred that 'there was no prejudice in the student community', but argued that they still needed to state this clearly, not to protect students from discrimination by other students, but to send a message to employers that they would not put up with racial discrimination.[49]

Employment during vacations was an important place where the NUS confronted racial discrimination. They ran a Vacation Work Scheme which was designed to assist students in finding employment during their holidays. While this scheme was open to all students, it tended to have a geographical bias in favour of students in the London area. The NUS also acknowledged in the early 1960s that it was particularly helpful to overseas students 'who were finding it extremely hard to find jobs'. Over the years the NUS had, they claimed, amassed 'special knowledge' in tackling the problem of racial discrimination in employment. They were particularly concerned about the imposition

of a colour bar in factories and it was proposed that they set up a working party 'to enquire into the difficulties encountered by overseas students in finding Vacation Work'. This was, however, defeated, not because students were unconcerned about a colour bar but because they thought it unnecessary to find out more 'facts', since the NUS had always 'taken a strong attitude in relation to the colour bar'. Members of the NUS did not need any more convincing that a colour bar was in existence and wanted to spend their time and effort in combatting rather than mapping it.[50]

The policy of the Vacation Work Scheme was to 'not supply any students at all where such a [colour] bar existed'.[51] This meant that they often turned down employers who were willing to take on some students and led to a loss in the number of employers registered on the scheme. The NUS executive recognised that this was a hardship for some students, but they felt that the principle was more important than having these extra places.[52] However, by 1962 this stance was being challenged within the NUS. The scarcity of work for students meant that some NUS members had begun to question these priorities. As an unnamed delegate from LSE said in November 1962, 'surely it was better to allow white people to take those jobs that were available only to them and allow the remaining ones to go to coloured people'. However, this was the minority view within the NUS council. Another unnamed delegate from Loughborough University found this view 'disgusting'. He argued that this was abandoning one part of their community for the benefit of another. One of the NUS vice-presidents, Mr Balch, argued that while their stance meant that they 'might be turning down jobs for white students', this was entirely appropriate, 'since the Union was against the colour bar'. While there were more widely divergent opinions expressed about these issues at council than there had been a few years previously, the council did pass, with a large majority, a resolution calling on the Ministry of Labour to 'disallow firms from making distinctions between students during periods of vacation work on grounds of colour or creed'.[53]

Another area in which the NUS challenged the issue of racial discrimination was in housing. Universities kept lists of approved lodging for students and the NUS worked to ensure that none of these 'approved' lodgings operated a colour bar. In November 1960 the NUS executive was appalled to report that they 'had evidence that certain universities, in their lodging schemes, practice discrimination in that they kept on their books landladies who would not accept ALL students'. While council agreed not to boycott such landladies immediately, as they thought

'it was likely that coloured students would be hit more by this than white students', they did undertake to find out the extent of the problem and the crisis that would ensue if they refused to use any such lodging.[54] There was a much more acrimonious discussion about the policy of opposing colour bars in housing than there had been in relation to vacation work. The NUS student secretary in 1960, Mr Hale, used feelings of guilt and pride to encourage students to oppose the colour bar in housing. He reminded delegates at council that 'the universities in this country had a tradition of being the bastions of enlightenment and liberty', which he said was being undermined by those who continued to rely 'on the prejudice of bigots and people who believed in the colour bar to run a lodging bureau in this admittedly difficult situation'. It was NUS policy, he reminded them, that 'all members of the union . . . be treated alike, irrespective of colour', which required them to oppose a colour bar in student lodging.[55] The NUS principles were clearly those being advocated for post-imperial Britain by organisations across the left. Yet, prevailing popular opinions about 'coloured' people were given more of an airing during discussions on lodging. As Chris Waters has shown, during the 1950s sociological experts were instrumental in creating and disseminating the view that 'coloured' immigrants were different, particularly in the way they lived.[56] These views were articulated by a delegate from Queen Mary College who told Council that

> he lived in an establishment which, if they like to call it that, operated a colour bar. The reason for it was that this establishment was in a part of London where many coloured people lived in the vicinity. Those coloured people lived by standards which were bad compared with their own. This gave the landlord such an impression of coloured people that he would not accept them. It was not because he did not like their black skins but he felt they would introduce these standards into his house. He knew that his neighbours would reject him if he accepted coloured lodgers. There was a feeling in that area of London that they were likely to be swamped by coloured students.[57]

This speech was roundly attacked by other council delegates and the speaker was accused of the 'rationalisation of prejudice'. The assistant student secretary of the NUS called these views 'disgusting' and said he was 'appalled to hear someone say that coloured students should live apart because they were different'.[58] This criticism was

supported by the majority of the NUS council who passed a resolution deploring 'the continued use made by University authorities of lodgings where the owners openly practice discrimination against coloured students'.[59]

There was no disagreement within NUS that there was a colour bar in student lodgings, but clearly there was some dispute about what they should do about it and, more fundamentally, why it existed. At the same NUS council in November 1960 the representative from Leeds University, Mr Singh, argued that 'the colour bar in "digs" was due largely to the mass ignorance so clearly demonstrated by the delegate from Queen Mary College' quoted above.[60] The NUS wanted to find out the extent of this 'ignorance' and set the executive to look into the problem. While this inquiry was still in 'an interim stage', at the following council meeting council did agree unanimously that

> much colour prejudice is based to a certain extent upon ignorance and that further contact with landladies will go a long way to solving the problems of colour prejudice in student lodgings. Council therefore urges constituent organisations to set up local committees to work against racial discrimination amongst landladies taking in students.[61]

This resolution was partly based on the successful activities that some local student unions had already taken to combat racial discrimination in lodgings. The student union at King's College, Newcastle had 'invited landladies to a tea party to meet coloured students'. They argued that 'by such means colour prejudice could be avoided or abolished'. The delegates from Kings reported that the activity had been a success as 'some landladies had written that they were now prepared to take coloured students'. The president of the King's College student's union argued that 'an extension [of this scheme] would sweep away prejudice and misconceptions about coloured students'.[62] Other universities had undertaken similar activities. Leeds University had also 'invited landladies to come in contact with coloured students'. The assistant student secretary of NUS agreed that 'tea parties would help combat these feelings' that 'coloured' students were 'different'.[63] In the early 1960s, then, when CND and the AAM were largely ignoring the problem of racial discrimination in Britain, the NUS was confronting it both within their ranks and within British society, undertaking concrete activities to try and dispel ignorance, prejudice and bigotry. Yet, this battle was not won easily as the NUS continued to pass resolutions voicing their concern 'about

any racialism in lodgings' and urging local unions to do something about it into the early 1970s.[64]

Through the middle of the 1960s the NUS continued to take a firm stand against racial discrimination. They worked with the British Caribbean Society in 1963 on a campaign for 'increased education against racial discrimination', which manifested as opposition to a speaking tour being undertaken by Oswald Mosley and his son Max.[65] In November 1963 NUS council enshrined in its policy opposition to 'any form of discrimination'.[66] In 1965, when the government was discussing the implementation of the Race Relations Act, the NUS was the only one out of CND, the AAM or the NICR movement to engage fully with the proposal. They were glad that 'Parliament was attempting to outlaw racial discrimination', but thought, like many contemporaries and subsequent commentators, that the act did not go far enough. The NUS executive argued that 'race relations had become a vital issue in Britain and students had a vital role to play in putting things right'. The role of students was to set 'an example to other members of the community' about how to deal with racial minorities in the 'right' way, a role which mirrored that advocated by the left on a larger scale.[67]

The NUS's defence of overseas students also brought them more directly into conflict with the government's immigration policy than either CND or the AAM. While they too had little to say about the first Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1961, in 1963, when the government intimated that it might cut the number of overseas students allowed to enter the country, the NUS took a stand. NUS council stated that 'any attempt to solve this country's educational problems by excluding overseas students from its institutions of higher education' was deplorable because 'overseas students have an essential part to play in British institutions'.[68] When the Wilson government drafted a White Paper on Immigration in 1965, NUS were concerned about the detrimental impact any change in policy could have on overseas students. The executive assured members that the 'NUS would not tolerate a position which militated against people who wanted to study here'. They resolved to write to the Home Office stating this position and report any reply to council.[69] At the following council meeting the NUS resolved to 'demand the withdrawal of the White Paper', which, they argued, 'departs from the principles of free entry for Commonwealth students, and which jeopardises the interests of overseas students by pandering to racialist sentiments'.[70]

In 1968, when students around the world were protesting about wars, democracy and facilities, the NUS was in the throes of deeply

divisive and fraught conversations about their constitution. The 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act was crucially important in enshrining racial discrimination into British law, but for the NUS it became subsumed within fights about their own Clause 3. While the NUS did strongly condemn the Bill, and argued in 1970 that the first clause should be repealed as it had been found by the European Commission on Human Rights to violate human rights, their initial discussion of it was rather limited.[71] The NUS called for an '"open door" policy on immigration' and highlighted that education was key to the main goal of the 'creation of a multi-racial society'. They argued it was 'the duty of individual members of NUS to bring its store of enlightened opinion to bear, as responsible members of society, on this problem'.[72] The NUS still saw ignorance as key in creating racial discrimination and education as the solution. According to the NUS, students should take a leading role in demonstrating best practice in matters of tolerance and good 'race' relations. 'Race' and racial discrimination were used as the key reasons that the NUS needed to do away with Clause 3 of the constitution and not be circumscribed in what they discussed.[73] While Clause 3 was not deleted until the following council meeting in April 1969, it was the issue of racial discrimination, and the argument that it could not be separated out from other issues, including education, housing, employment and more general societal ills, that seemed to hold the most sway and convince delegates to vote to change the constitution.[74]

The tone and tenor of NUS discussions of 'race' and racial discrimination remained largely continuous, but in the late 1960s they were becoming increasingly concerned about the level of racism present in British society. The NUS's assessment at the beginning of the decade, that racial discrimination was simply the result of ignorance that could be easily eradicated, was proving incorrect. The NUS agreed with CND that Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech in April 1968 had made racism respectable. At the council meeting following Powell's speech the NUS council feared 'the speeches made by Enoch Powell, which incited the precipitated active racialism among certain sectors of the white population, causing undue distress to all immigrants living in these and other communities'.[75] A delegate from Exeter argued that 'race' was an issue that all unions in all parts of the country needed to be concerned about. He said that 'it is a sad commentary on the social situation in Britain that you can go into a pub and hear conversations which ten years ago would only have been heard in Bloomfontein [*sic*] or Alabama'.[76]

From 1969 the NUS were not confined to speak about 'race' and racial discrimination only in terms of students, and they took this opportunity to speak much more broadly about the problems of racism. This began within the NUS as an attempt to educate members themselves about 'race'. It was recognised in 1969 that, contrary to the belief voiced in 1958 by Mr Grennan above that no students were racist, there was racism and ignorance within the student community and even some delegates at NUS council. A delegate from Sussex set out to illustrate the lack of understanding within the NUS about 'colour' in November 1969. The demonstration was recorded in the NUS council minutes:

> the Undeclared Sussex University Delegate began: 'Would everybody sit down? Would all members of Conference who are coloured stand up? That's your first mistake. You're all bloody coloured. Some of you are white, some pink, some grey. But you're all coloured'.[77]

This demonstration was met with 'prolonged applause' and the delegate received a standing ovation.[78] At the same council meeting a member of the executive commended the increased activism against racialism within the NUS, but said that they needed to be aware 'about the change that was to take place in universities and colleges when more of the coloured student intake would come, not from overseas, but from within Britain'. This, she said, 'would be a great test for their policies . . . [and] their own attitudes'.[79] She thought it was all well and good to combat discrimination against people who were 'foreign', to argue that immigrants and overseas students should be treated fairly. It was another, she pointed out, to acknowledge that many black students were just as 'British' as they were. Facing racial discrimination was not simply a matter of welcoming newcomers but also changing their conceptions of who was British and what it meant to be British. It was about creating a post-imperial Britain that was based on equality and inclusion of difference.

By the early 1970s the NUS was internally divided about issues of 'race' and racial discrimination. Whereas in the late 1950s and early 1960s the executive of the NUS could make sweeping statements about the attitudes of the NUS, and even the entire student population, without criticism, by the early 1970s widely divergent views were being voiced within NUS council. The discussion of the 1971 Immigration Act in particular aired these differing attitudes. The delegate from Wolverhampton supported the NUS motion, saying, 'the white man had a duty towards the black man'. The paternalism of this statement and its similarity to

the 'White man's burden' apparently went unnoticed.[80] A delegate from Manchester Polytechnic went further in her speech. Although she was greeted with 'uproar and hissing', she argued that

> immigration control was necessary . . . because otherwise there would be detriment to those seeking to live in Britain and those already living here in housing, employment and education . . . many of the West Indians in Manchester, she knew, would dearly love to return to their country but because of the economic situation there, this was not an attractive proposition.[81]

This speech was interrupted on several occasions with the question 'Why?', but the speaker was allowed to finish. A self-proclaimed member of the Monday Club attended this NUS council and was given a 'rough ride' by other delegates.[82] When the delegate from the Monday Club got up to speak he was greeted with 'slow hand clapping, whistles, boos and general brouhaha'. In the middle of his speech he was interrupted with 'cries of Enoch Powell' and at the end of his speech 'some delegates held up cards bearing single letters which together spelt the word ENOCH'.[83] In the early 1970s, as the National Front gained support, a deep division was becoming apparent even within the NUS about 'race'.

These speeches were largely condemned by the majority of NUS delegates who saw the government's proposed immigration bill as a 'filter for black and white', which would be 'the official seal of approval for the racialism long apparent in British society'. Yet, these differing views indicated a fragmenting of attitudes within the NUS about 'race' and racism. The majority of those present did pass a far-reaching resolution against Tory policy. This long resolution, passed with only one vote against, began by deploring 'the racialist actions of the Tory Government' and noting ongoing and increasing discrimination against black people in Britain. It argued that the 1971 Immigration Bill contravened human rights and 'insults and degrades black people, whether born in Britain or not, and restricts their freedom of movement'. The NUS thought the bill would increase 'racial strife' and encourage the mistaken idea that 'the basis of racialism in Britain results from the presence of black groups'. The NUS were concerned that the majority of students had 'not yet analysed the problems of discrimination in their full socio-political context', despite the NUS commitment to a multiracial society. The NUS rejected completely the 'policy of repatriation, voluntary or otherwise, and the concept of those being born in this country with non-white skins being subjected to tests of their citizenship', clearly rejecting 'the belief

that anyone *born* here is somehow an "immigrant" '.[84] The NUS had a long-standing policy of advocating a multiracial, inclusive and equal post-imperial Britain, which was clearly intact at the beginning of the 1970s.

Conceptualising 'Race' and Religion in Northern Ireland

'Race' and racial discrimination were key areas of concern for activists in Northern Ireland, but on a slightly different basis to CND, the AAM and NUS. The framework and context of Northern Ireland made the debate about 'race' a religious one. For members of the Northern Irish civil rights movement, their goal was to end racial discrimination not because they were enlightened, as the NUS believed about themselves, or because racial violence might escalate – the main concern of CND – but because they were the victims of racial discrimination every day. One of the key arguments of the civil rights movement was that religious discrimination was a form of racial discrimination and should be treated as such under the law.[85] Many of the groups within the civil rights movement were interested in, and made links with, black organisations. For them these were connections of solidarity between oppressed peoples. Across the spectrum of activists in Northern Ireland this solidarity was expressed linguistically by referring to Catholics in Northern Ireland as 'Ulster's White Negroes', borrowing a phrase first used by Québécois activist Pierre Vallières.[86] Although it is not clear whether Northern Irish activists knew of this source of the phrase, they did clearly intend to identify Catholics in Northern Ireland with oppressed people around the world.

One of the core aims of the CDU was to have the Race Relations Act cover Northern Ireland and include discrimination on religious grounds.[87] The McCluskeys too worked tirelessly on this front. In 1965 Patricia McCluskey wrote to the Campaign against Racial Discrimination (CARD), telling them that 'what we are fighting here is primarily religious discrimination [but] it can also to a great degree be regarded as racial'. She went on to describe Catholics as 'an earlier race' that was indigenous to Ireland.[88] The 1968 Race Relations Bill was of concern to activists in Northern Ireland. In particular the CSJ reported in the spring of 1968 that their 'goodwill has changed to furious resentment' because the 'Race Relations Bill's protection [was] refused to Britain's oldest and most notorious minority!'[89] The CSJ clearly stated that they, and other groups in Northern Ireland including the Northern Ireland Labour Party, all 'deplore[d] discrimination' of all kinds.[90] Kevin Boyle keenly followed

the 1964 Smethwick election, in which Peter Griffiths beat the incumbent Patrick Gordon Walker, with the campaign slogan, 'If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour'.[91] Boyle was concerned more broadly about the plight of 'coloured people' in Britain, apartheid in South Africa and 'race' issues in the Irish Republic.[92] There was substantial discussion within the Northern Irish civil rights movement about the definition of discrimination in order to show the continuity between religious and racial discrimination. Kevin Boyle defined discrimination as 'treating equals as unequals', which he says in Northern Ireland meant 'treating people differently because of their religion'.[93] The CSJ argued that in Northern Ireland most of the time the rule of thumb which equated 'Unionist' with 'Protestant' and 'Nationalist' with 'Roman Catholic' was accurate and that, therefore, 'a form of segregation is effected based not on race, as in Nazi Germany, nor on colour, as in the Southern States of the United States of America, but on religion'.[94] The implication was that these forms of discrimination, no matter what their basis, were equivalent and comparable. In 1969 within 'Free Belfast', the 'no-go' area set up after Catholic communities in Belfast were attacked by the RUC, it was argued that they were living under an apartheid system, as discrimination based on religion was the same as division based on colour.[95]

However, when members of the civil rights movement drew parallels between their situation and those of other racial minorities it was most often not to England that they turned their attention. They most commonly drew parallels between themselves and the African American civil rights movement. In 1963 the Dungannon Housing Action Committee, the precursor of the CSJ, organised several demonstrations at which posters linked Dungannon with Alabama and made parallels between the discrimination of blacks and Catholics.[96] These parallels were also made in Derry. One protest march to the Guildhall, Derry's city hall, was titled 'Derry's Little Rock Calls for Fair Play', making clear their intended link between the treatment of black people in the Southern United States, Little Rock, Arkansas, and Catholics in Northern Ireland's second city.[97] Later in the decade it was the more radical PD who took up discussion of this parallel and made close personal connections with blacks in the United States.[98] PD developed a relationship with the Black Panthers in the USA, keeping up with their activities in the media, and when some of their members, including Bernadette McAliskey (Devlin) and others, went on speaking and fundraising tours of the USA in 1969 and 1970, they made direct personal connections.[99] In January 1969, when PD organised a march from Belfast to Derry,

leader Michael Farrell was quite clear that the march 'was consciously modelled on the Selma-Montgomery march led by Martin Luther King in Alabama'.[100]

Northern Irish civil rights activists also made links between their situation and those in other British colonies, including Rhodesia. The situation in Northern Ireland was often described as one of 'apartheid'.[101] In the aftermath of Rhodesian UDI, Northern Irish civil rights activists increasingly drew a parallel between themselves and the black population in Rhodesia. This, they hoped, would increase the pressure on the British government to intervene in Northern Irish affairs as it was expected they would do in Rhodesia. The CSJ wrote to a number of Westminster MPs playing up this parallel and received replies from two MPs, including Stan Orme, saying they agreed that such a parallel could and should be drawn.[102] In October 1965 Bernard Floud, Labour MP, in a speech to parliament, pointed out the 'many similarities between the situation in Rhodesia and that in Northern Ireland'.[103] Northern Irish activists hoped that if the British government could be convinced to intervene in Rhodesia to oppose an inequitable system there, they could also be convinced to intervene in Northern Ireland.

Activists within the Northern Irish civil rights movement were clearly concerned about racial discrimination within the United Kingdom during the 1960s. However, the terms of debate were different from those in the rest of the country. They did not engage with the discussions about the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts nor mention Enoch Powell and his infamous speech. Powell did become more important for activists in Northern Ireland a few years later when he became a Unionist MP for South Down in 1974. The NICR movement saw Catholics in Northern Ireland as a group who were discriminated against as much, if not more, than any other. But even worse, their discrimination was ignored. In drawing parallels between themselves and black groups, they attempted to draw the attention of the public and legislators and to dispel some of the ignorance or confusion about the situation in Northern Ireland by speaking about it in terms – those of 'race' – which were well understood by the public. But the use of this terminology was not simply a political ploy. It vividly reflects the feeling of injustice that permeated the civil rights movement and, more broadly, the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. It also reflected a view of a post-imperial Britain where discrimination, based on colour, religion or ethnicity, should not be tolerated. It was a worldview and image of what the 'new' Britain should be like which was remarkably similar in mentality, if not in focus, to those presented by CND, the AAM and the NUS.

Conclusion

In the late 1950s and early 1960s some parts of the British radical left, such as CND and the AAM, largely saw racism and racial discrimination as an issue that did not directly affect them or their work. Others, like the NUS and some members of the NICR movement, more easily saw the connection between their own goals and opposition to racism in Britain in the early 1960s. Across the left there was little understanding about what the end of the empire would mean to their own lives and how the issues that they addressed would have to change. Even for the AAM, designed specifically to combat racial discrimination and problems of 'race' relations, these were things that happened out in the world, not in Britain. This designation of 'race' as an external issue could no longer be sustained by the middle of the 1960s. While none of these groups commented on the first Commonwealth Immigrants Act, the second in 1968 was the subject of sustained criticism.

It is difficult to determine specifically what accounts for this shift. The first Commonwealth Immigrants Act is often credited for changing the character of immigration in Britain from a 'guest-worker' model to a settlement model.[104] This transition meant that there were more immigrants entering the country intent on staying and developing lives for themselves. Some people therefore argue that more white Britons were coming into contact with 'non-white' people and more concern was created about their presence and its impact.[105] The problem with this argument is that it continues to blame immigrants for their presence and indicates that a racist response was inevitable. The response of those on the left was different. Increasing awareness of the racism that 'non-white' people were subjected to within Britain galvanised the British radical left to action. The radical left began to see this as a problem within their own nation and communities. It was in the mid-1960s, roughly 1963–64, that 'race' issues came home to the British left wing. The reasons for the specific timing of this transition are not entirely clear. The election of Wilson and the expectations that accompanied his leadership may have had something to do with it. The 1964 election also saw the first campaign in which opposition to 'non-white' immigration won in the constituency of Smethwick in Staffordshire. Whatever the specific cause, it was clear that racial discrimination could no longer simply be seen as something that happened in former colonies, in South Africa or Rhodesia, or in the United States. The end of the British Empire had a profound effect on the ethnic, racial and religious contours of the British population. While members of CND, the AAM, the NUS and the

NICR movement all believed in equality, they had different, complicated and often contradictory responses to these changes. It is not true that members of the radical extra-parliamentary left accepted the creation of a multiracial Britain easily and without issue. They did, in the end, accept it, much more openly than other areas of British society, but not always easily. They clearly advocated a progressive, equal and inclusive view of post-imperial Britain, but it was sometimes more difficult to apply this view to their own day-to-day lives and activities.

Conclusion

The British Empire emerged from the Second World War largely intact, yet by the 1970s only small pockets of imperial holdings remained. Until recently it has been widely assumed, both among scholars and the general public, that this transformation was largely unproblematic. Yet, the period of particularly rapid decolonisation, between 1957 and 1964, has also been seen as a period in which Britain was going through an identity crisis. Many people, in many walks of life, were concerned about the 'break-up' of Britain, British 'decline', British 'stagnation', or other forms of economic, social and political crisis. These two phenomena have remained largely parallel discussions with each seemingly operating in isolation. It is the contention of this book that we need to combine these two discussions and look more closely at the impact of the end of empire on British culture, society and ideas of Britain. In doing so we can begin to unpick how the end of the British Empire prompted people throughout Britain to reconceptualise Britain's place in the world and what it meant to live in post-imperial Britain.

For the radical left the end of empire was not necessarily a bad thing. It offered a great opportunity to create a post-imperial Britain that was progressive and moral. For CND Britain could now concentrate on being the rational voice between the Soviet Union and United States, showing them, and the rest of the world, how to be strong moral leaders not dependent on nuclear weapons. For the AAM the end of empire meant that Britain could now forge equal relationships with new states and demonstrate their commitment to equal treatment of all regardless of skin colour. For the NUS the end of empire meant that Britain was no longer one of the oppressor states, which increased their own ability to campaign for equality and the end of racial and other types of discrimination against students. For members of the NICR movement

the end of empire meant the possibility of equality in their part of the United Kingdom if not the eventual unification of Ireland. The end of empire meant the possibility of change. Neither those on the left nor any postwar British government believed that this necessarily meant a diminution of Britain's international power. They all agreed that Britain should remain a great power, but disagreed on the best way to accomplish this. Successive British governments fell back on tried and tested ways to maintain their international status – keeping up with the latest arms and maintaining traditional alliances – rather than looking for new ways to cultivate this status as those on the left urged.

In the early 1960s this discussion about what Britain should be, and who Britons were, after empire was largely taking place without direct reference to the empire. There was certainly newspaper coverage of independence ceremonies and talk about the formal end of empire, but this was largely divorced from discussions about Britain's new international position and the changing nature of British society. Despite the importance of empire for the accomplishment of their goals, CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement were all silent about empire in the early 1960s. This 'amnesia' about empire worked to distance modern Britons from their imperial past. By the late 1960s this distance between modern Britain and its imperial past had been effectively accomplished. The main imperial culprits were now the United States and South Africa. Britain still had to make amends for some of its previous activities, but they were now seen as having little direct bearing on the lives of the British people. Part of this distancing project included separating the empire from the Commonwealth. While empire was remembered as coercive and violent, the Commonwealth was created as a progressive, multiracial organisation of equals. Post-imperial Britain could therefore embody all of the best attributes of a modern, progressive and moral state.

Despite the opportunity and desire for change in the basis of Britain's international position, the left's views of the British people themselves show a remarkable level of continuity. The tropes used about the British people during the Second World War continued to have a strong resonance throughout the 1960s. The ideal Briton was still perceived as hard-working, self-sacrificing, selfless, willing to do what they could for the common good and morally upstanding. However, over the course of the 1960s this ideal Briton seemed harder and harder to locate. Parts of the left were concerned about the impact of affluence on the British people and the perceived erosion of working-class identity, but this was not the biggest perceived threat. Rather than the affluence and

embourgeoisement of the early 1960s, it was the perceived apathy, individualism, greed and indifference of the late 1960s which was truly disturbing to the radical left. Alongside this growing apathy the left perceived a growing normalisation of racism and bigotry. The tolerance, morality and concern for fairness and equality that the left assumed were ingrained in the British psyche were, by the late 1960s, proving to be the exception rather than the norm. In the early 1960s CND and the AAM did not discuss concerns about racial inequalities in Britain both because they each saw this as beyond their specific campaigning areas, but also because they trusted the British people to take a stand against such ideas. By the end of the 1960s it was clear that racial injustice was not being easily eradicated by rationality, but was spreading and, particularly after Enoch Powell's 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech, becoming increasingly accepted in public places. Thus by the end of the 1960s, CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement were all taking a stand against racial discrimination both abroad and in Britain. They each saw racism as fundamentally in opposition to the idea of post-imperial Britain that they were trying to create.

The 1960s is a decade that has captured the imagination of both scholars and the general public. It is the subject of numerous books and articles, television and radio programmes and many a reminiscence session in the pub, café, bookstore and library, to name just a few. The 1960s were perceived at the time as a period of rapid change, and this perception should not be discounted. Yet, it is also true that the changes which many people attribute to the 1960s were not experienced universally and were largely a product of the end of the decade. Part of the misconception of the decade is the result of the telescoping of memory, but it is also caused by comparisons made with other states, particularly the United States, where the 1960s are in many ways much more clearly a discrete period. In Britain, many changes began in the 1960s but were not fully realised until the 1970s. We also need to be wary about discussions of the 1960s as a single continuous period. Instead we should see the 1960s as itself made up of a number of phases with particular moments of transition. Although no historical event marks a clear and universally recognised point of change, it is useful to distinguish changes of popular mood or context that shape what is both possible and likely. One of these transition points was 1962–63. The Cuban Missile Crisis and Profumo affair both helped to destabilise ideas about Britain's international position in relation to the two superpowers, and the moral credibility of British political leaders and society generally. The period of 1963–64 has also been pegged as a particular moment

of change. Callum Brown sees this as the beginning of rapid secularisation in Britain, while this book has shown this moment as a transition in thinking about 'race' within the radical left. The middle years of the 1960s were thus a period for the radical left of both optimism and disillusionment. The second moment of transition occurred around 1967–68 and can be seen more as a move toward radicalisation. In reaction to student riots around the West, the Czechoslovakian uprising and growing racial tensions around the world, the political climate shifted and allowed for a more radical or even revolutionary rhetoric. This put an important strain on CND, which remained moderate and driven by the rule of law, but gave a push to the AAM, who were able to seize upon this more radical rhetoric and engage wider groups of people, particularly students. The radicalisation of the NUS occurred from 1969, when its constitution was changed, and carried on into the early 1970s.

CND, the AAM, the NUS and the NICR movement may not have been able to radically alter British foreign policy or create the ideal British society that they imagined. But this is not the only measure of success. Each were able to put their views across to both the public and political elites, changing the form and nature of debate. They were able to capture the imaginations of several tens of thousands of people, galvanising them to take action, whether it was marching at Easter, refusing to buy South African oranges or simply being more aware of issues of nuclear weapons, apartheid, student welfare or the unequal treatment of Catholics in Northern Ireland. Examining the attitudes and ideas put forward by these four groups allows us to explore a barometer of opinion across the British radical left throughout the 1960s. They together represent the moderate and radical fringes of the left, attitudes of both the youth and the middle-aged, ideas from the religious and the secular left. They allow us to explore in more depth the concerns raised by the end of the British Empire for those people outside of government circles. The end of the British Empire required a rethinking of what it was to be British. The conversation, or debate, about what post-imperial Britain could or should be encompassed people from all walks of life and all political backgrounds.

Notes

Introduction

1. Michael Gove, 15 November 2010, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, column 634, www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011.
2. Ofsted made a statement to this effect on 11 July 2004 which was reported on by the BBC (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/3884087.stm) and *The Telegraph* (www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews).
3. There is a growing literature on the Falklands War, most of which does not contextualise the conflict in terms of the British Empire despite the jingoistic use of imperial ideology during the conflict.
4. Bill Schwarz (2011) *The White Man's World*, Memories of Empire, 1 (Oxford University Press), p. 6.
5. Avner Offer (1993) 'The British Empire, 1870–1914: A Waste of Money?', *The Economic History Review* 46, no. 2, 215–38.
6. Bernard Porter (2004) *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford University Press); John M. MacKenzie (1984) *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960* (Manchester University Press).
7. Alan Sked (1987) *Britain's Decline: Problems and Perspectives* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).
8. Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (2006) 'Introduction: Being at Home with the Empire', in Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (eds), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge University Press).
9. Bill Schwarz (1996) ' "The Only White Man in There": The Re-Racialisation of England, 1956–1968', *Race and Class* 38, no. 1, 65.
10. Stuart Ward (ed.) (2001) *British Culture and the End of Empire*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester University Press).
11. Stuart Ward (2001) 'Introduction', in idem (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester University Press), p. 6.
12. Ibid., pp. 4–5; David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 159–60.
13. Wendy Webster (2005) *Englishness and Empire 1939–1965* (Oxford University Press), pp. 3, 5.
14. Schwarz, *The White Man's World*, pp. 4–5.
15. Donatella della Porter and Mario Diani (1999) *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell), p. 4.
16. Ibid., pp. 85–6.
17. Benedict R. O'G. Anderson (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. and extended edn (London: Verso).
18. Some of the key historical texts on identity include: Michael Billig (1995) *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage); Linda Colley (1992) *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press); R. Cohen (1994)

Frontiers of Identity: The British and the Others (London: Longman); Raphael Samuel (1989) *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, History Workshop Series (London: Routledge); Paul Ward (2004) *Britishness since 1870* (London: Routledge); R. Weight (2002) *Patriots: National Identity in Britain 1940–2000* (London: Macmillan).

19. Peter Mandler (2006) 'What Is "National Identity?" Definitions and Applications in Modern British Historiography', *Modern Intellectual History* 3, no. 2.
20. Ibid., pp. 274–5.
21. Dilip Hiro (1991) *Black British, White British: A History of Race Relations in Britain*, 3rd edn (London: Grafton Books), p. 210.
22. Peter Fryer (1984) *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press), pp. 372–3.
23. Hiro, *Black British, White British*, p. 331. Hiro's figures show a significant increase in immigration to 57,700 in 1960, 136,400 in 1961 and 83,771 in the first half of 1962.
24. Kathleen Paul (1997) *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), p. 4. She estimates that 335,000 European POWs were employed in Britain by 1945.
25. Paul Addison and Harriet Jones (2007) *A Companion to Contemporary Britain, 1939–2000* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell), p. 48.
26. Paul Gilroy (2002) *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Routledge), p. 39.
27. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black*, p. 46.
28. Anna Marie Smith (1994) *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain, 1968–1990* (Cambridge University Press), p. 139.
29. Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, p. 134.
30. Kathleen Paul, 'From Subjects to Immigrants: Black Britons and National Identity, 1948–1962', in Richard Weight and Abigail Beach (eds) *The Right to Belong: Citizenship and National Identity in Britain, 1930–1960* (London: I.B. Tauris), p. 231.
31. Smith, *New Right Discourse*, p. 130.
32. Wendy Webster (1998) *Imagining Home: Gender, 'Race' and National Identity, 1945–64* (London: UCL Press), p. 183.
33. Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea (1984) *White Man's Country: Racism in British Politics* (London: Pluto Press), p. 23.
34. E. Ellis Cashmore (1989) *United Kingdom? Class, Race and Gender since the War* (London: Unwin Hyman), p. 90.
35. Dennis Dean (1993) 'The Conservative Governments and the Restriction of Commonwealth Immigration in the 1950s: The Problems of Constraint', *The Historical Journal* 35, no. 1, p. 61.
36. Randall Hansen (2000) *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford University Press), p. 90.
37. John Solomos (1989) *Race and Racism in Britain* (Houndsmill: Macmillan), p. 53.
38. Michael Dummet and Ann Dummet (1982) 'The Role of Government in Britain's Racial Crisis', in Charles Husband (ed.), *'Race' in Britain: Continuity and Change* (London: Hutchinson), p. 101.

39. Bob Carter, Clive Harris and Shirley Joshi (1993) 'The 1951–55 Conservative Government and the Racialization of Black Immigration', in James Winston and Clive Harris (eds), *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain* (London: Verso), p. 62.
40. For a discussion of Englishness and the nostalgia for the rural landscape, see Christine Berberich (2006) 'The Green and Pleasant Land: Cultural Constructions of Englishness', in Robert Burden and Stephan Kohl (eds), *Landscape and Englishness* (New York: Rodopi), pp. 207–24; Schwarz, *White Man's World*, p. 6.
41. Vron Ware (1996) 'Defining Forces: "Race", Gender and Memories of Empire', in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds), *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (London: Routledge), p. 143. Ware's work is part of a growing field of 'whiteness studies' that was pioneered by Ruth Frankenberg (1993) *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) and David Roediger (1991) *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso), amongst others.
42. Webster, *Imagining Home*, p. xvii.
43. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black*, p. 45; Paul, 'From Subjects to Immigrants', p. 228.
44. For support of this idea, see Hiro, *Black British, White British*; Kenneth Lunn (1990) 'The British State and Immigration, 1945–51: New Light on the Empire Windrush', in Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn (eds), *The Politics of Marginality: Race, the Radical Rights and Minorities in Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Frank Cass), pp. 161–74, and Laura Tabili (1994) *'We Ask for British Justice': Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press). For discussion of empire as too simple an explanation for racism, see Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black*; Carter, Harris and Joshi, 'The 1951–55 Conservative Government', and Chris Waters (1997) ' "Dark Strangers in Our Midst": Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947–63', *Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 2.
45. In particular see Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration*, p. 121. He argues that strong immigration controls are necessary and inevitable throughout the postwar Western world rather than the result of racism. For views which locate racism outside of the government see Fryer, *Staying Power*; Paul Foot (1965) *Immigration and Race in British Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin); Kenneth O. Morgan (2001) *The People's Peace: British History since 1945* (Reading: Oxford University Press); Zig Layton-Henry (1992) *The Politics of Immigration: Immigration, 'Race' and 'Race' Relations in Post-War Britain*, Making Contemporary Britain (Oxford: Blackwell), p. 40; Paul B. Rich (1994) *Prospero's Return? Historical Essays on Race, Culture and British Society* (London: Hansib) and Stephen Brooke (1996) 'The Conservative Party, Immigration and National Identity, 1948–68', in Martin Francis and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (eds), *The Conservatives and British Society 1880–1990* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press), pp. 147–70. For the argument that the government was more liberal than the public see Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration*.
46. Schwarz, *The White Man's World*, p. 12.

47. Arthur Marwick (1998) *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, C.1958–1974* (Oxford University Press), p. 4.
48. Gerard DeGroot (2009) *The Sixties Unplugged* (London: Pan MacMillan).
49. Ibid., p. 1.
50. The notion of a 'public mood' is a complicated and contested one. While it is true that there is never one all-encompassing 'public mood', and that even if there was historians would be hard-pressed to find it, changes in normative ideas about what is accepted or unacceptable certainly can be mapped. Paul Addison has likened the attempt to discover the 'public mood' to 'hunting the unicorn'. Paul Addison (1977) *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (London: Quartet Books), p. 15.
51. David Reynolds (2000) *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd edn (Harlow: Longman).
52. Sked, *Britain's Decline*, p. 1.
53. Jim Tomlinson (2003) 'The Decline of the Empire and the Economic "Decline" of Britain', *Twentieth Century British History* 14, no. 3; idem (2001) *The Politics of Decline: Understanding Post-War Britain* (London: Longman); idem (1996) 'Inventing "Decline": The Falling Behind of the British Economy in the Postwar Years', *The Economic History Review* 49, no. 4.
54. Sked, *Britain's Decline*, p. 40.
55. Hall and Rose, 'Introduction: Being at Home with the Empire'.
56. Bill Schwarz (1996) 'Conquerors of Truth: Reflections on Postcolonial Theory', in idem (ed.), *The Expansion of England: Race, Ethnicity and Cultural History* (London: Routledge).
57. Schwarz, *The White Man's World*.
58. Ibid., p. 6.
59. Matthew Hilton, James McKay and Nick Crowson (eds) (2009) *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-State Actors in Society and Politics since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).
60. This terminology is used by Arthur Marwick. Others have used slightly different dates, but agreed on the idea of the 'sixties' spilling over the chronological decade. See, for example, Gerd-Rainer Horn (2007) *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1951–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
61. Kate Hudson (2005) *CND – Now More Than Ever: The Story of a Peace Movement* (London: Vision Paperbacks).
62. The literature on CND is extensive. Some of the most important texts include Paul Byrne (1988) *The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament* (London: Croom Helm); Frank Parkin (1968) *Middle Class Radicalism: The Social Bases of the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament* (Manchester University Press); R.K.S. Taylor and Colin Pritchard (1980) *The Protest Makers: The British Nuclear Disarmament Movement of 1958–1965, Twenty Years On* (Oxford: Pergamon); R.K.S. Taylor (1988) *Against the Bomb: The British Peace Movement, 1958–1965* (Oxford: Clarendon).
63. Roger Fieldhouse (2005) *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain: A Study in Pressure Group Politics* (London: Merlin).
64. Mike Day, personal communication.

65. Nick Thomas (2002) 'Challenging Myths of the 1960s: The Case of Student Protest in Britain', *Twentieth Century British History* 13, no. 3.
66. The key texts about the Civil Rights movement in Northern Ireland include Bob Purdie (1990) *Politics in the Streets: The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff); Simon Prince (2007) *Northern Ireland's '68: Civil Rights, Global Revolt and the Origins of the Troubles* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press); Michael Farrell (1976) *Northern Ireland, the Orange State*, 2nd edn (London: Pluto Press); Michael Farrell (1988) *Twenty Years On* (Dingle: Brandon); Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh (1994) *'Ulster's White Negroes': From Civil Rights to Insurrection* (Edinburgh: AK Press).

1 British 'Greatness' after Empire

1. Harold Macmillan (1960) 'The Wind of Change, February 3 1960'. Published in (2007) *Great Speeches of the 20th Century*, vol. 4 (London: Guardian).
2. For example, see the ongoing debate in the following texts: John M. MacKenzie (1986) *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester University Press); John M. MacKenzie (1984) *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester University Press); Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*; Bernard Porter (2004) *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850–2004*, 4th edn (Harlow: Pearson/Longman); Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire*.
3. Richard Toye (2010) *Churchill's Empire: The World That Made Him and the World He Made* (London: Macmillan).
4. Stephen Howe (1993) *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918–1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
5. V.H. Rothwell (1992) *Anthony Eden: A Political Biography 1931–1957* (Manchester University Press), p. 243.
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3. Parkin, *Middle Class Radicalism*. The view of CND as dominated by the middle classes was supported by Taylor and Pritchard, *The Protest Makers*, p. 51, and Byrne, *The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament*, p. 1. Byrne in particular identifies the 'educated middle class' as the large majority of those involved in CND.
4. For a contemporary account of the impact of affluence on the working classes, see Zweig, *The Worker in an Affluent Society*. More recent work has been done on the Labour Party's assessment of affluence. See Black, *The Political Culture*.
5. Parkin, *Middle Class Radicalism*, p. 2. Peggy Duff was not terribly surprised or impressed by Parkin's findings. See Peggy Duff (1971) *Left, Left, Left: A Personal Account of Six Protest Campaigns, 1945–65* (London: Allison & Busby), p. 126.

6. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution*.
7. Parkin, *Middle Class Radicalism*, p. 3.
8. This view was given by Taylor and Pritchard, *The Protest Makers*, p. 3.
9. There is an extensive literature, both contemporary and subsequently, about youth in the 1960s. Some of the key texts include Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (1976) *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (London: Hutchinson [for] the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham); Bill Osgerby (1998) *Youth in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell); J. Springhall (1998) *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gansta-Rap, 1830–1996* (Basingstoke: Macmillan).
10. Holger Nehring (2005) 'The British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons and the Cultures of the Cold War, 1957–64', *Contemporary British History* 19, no. 2, 229.
11. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution*.
12. Jill Liddington (1989) *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820* (London: Virago).
13. See, in particular, the archives of the Scottish Region CND held at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow.
14. Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, p. 211.
15. Myers, 'British Peace Politics', p. 103.
16. Peggy Duff 'Letter to Bertrand Russell', 24 January 1958, the Bertrand Russell Archive.
17. Taylor and Pritchard, *The Protest Makers*, p. 9.
18. Ibid., p. 57.
19. Ibid., p. 58.
20. Hudson, *CND – Now More Than Ever*.
21. See the Organizational History of the AAM by Lucy McCann held at Rhodes House, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/rhl/aam/aam.html.
22. For a more detailed examination of the organisation of the AAM see Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*.
23. The first sabbatical office of the NUS was Stanley Jenkins, elected NUS president in 1949. NUS, 'Spotlight on Students' Union Excellence', February 2012, p. 9.
24. The NUS set up a Welsh Committee in 1956 to increase communication between Welsh student unions and the national executive and it was reported in 1958 that this was having the desired effect. NUS, 'Annual Council Meeting', April 1958, p, 71. There was also a Welsh vice-president of the NUS to ensure Welsh issues were adequately represented on the executive, although this did not always ensure that relations were smooth, to which the disaffiliation of the Bangor Student Union in late 1958 or early 1959 attests. However, in April 1963 the executive proposed, and the motion was passed, to do away with a specifically Welsh vice-president based on the argument that Welsh members were adequately represented without such a specific executive position. An executive member specifically to look after Northern Ireland affairs was appointed in November 1960.
25. NUS, 'Annual Council Meeting November 1958', MRC/MSS/280/NUS/99/CM.
26. These statistics are from 'Canary in the Coal Mine', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 1 December 2011, www.timeshighereducation.co.uk.

27. Day, 'A Short History of the National Union of Students', pp. 20, 24.
28. Ibid., pp. 28–9.
29. Purdie, *Politics in the Streets*, p. 137.
30. Ibid., pp. 149–50.
31. Ibid., pp. 132ff.
32. Ibid., pp. 173–5, 190–7.
33. J. Brian Garrett, Vincent L. Hanna and Turlough O'Donnell, Q.C., 'Submission of Northern Ireland Society of Labour Lawyers to Cameron Commission', PRONI/ Kevin Boyle Papers/D/3297/4, 1969.
34. Mike Cahill and Dave Montgomery, 'People's Democracy', *Gown* 22 October 1968.
35. 'The People's Fortnight', *Gown* 22 October 1968.
36. PD, 'Letter to Friends', PRONI/Kevin Boyle Papers/D/3297/7, November 1968.
37. Black, *The Political Culture*.
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39. 'Questions and Answers on the March in London', *Sanity* March 1964.
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41. *Sanity* Easter Monday 1962, p. 3.
42. 'Following the Chartists' Route', *Sanity* March 1964.
43. Nehring, 'The British and West German Protests', p. 231.
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48. Ibid.
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52. AAM, 'National Committee, 30 July 1963', AAM/B/2.
53. Christabel Gurney (2000) '"A Great Cause": The Origins of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, June 1959–March 1960', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 1, 123.
54. Ibid., p. 144.
55. AAM, 'National Committee, 8 October 1962', AAM/B/2.
56. AAM, 'National Committee, 4 December 1962', AAM/B/2.
57. AAM, 'National Committee, 26 July 1965', AAM/B/2.
58. AAM, 'National Committee, 23 October 1965', AAM/B/2.
59. AAM, 'Executive Committee, 16 April 1962', AAM/B/3.
60. Ibid.
61. AAM, 'Executive Committee, 16 September 1965', AAM/B/3.
62. Ibid.
63. Morgan, *The People's Peace*, p. 296.
64. NUS, 'Annual Council Meeting April 1958', p. 35.

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66. For a discussion of the history of rags see Carol Dyhouse (2006) *Students: A Gendered History* (London: Taylor & Francis), pp. 186ff.
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69. NUS, 'Annual Council Meeting April 1958', p. 39.
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5 Views of the British People

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3. Black, *The Political Culture*.
4. For a discussion of nineteenth-century populism, see Patrick Joyce (1991) *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848–1914* (Cambridge University Press).
5. See Alison Light (1991) *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge) and Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*.
6. John Baxendale (1999) ' "You and I – All of Us Ordinary People": Renegotiating "Britishness" in Wartime', in Nick Hayes (ed.), *'Millions Like Us?' British Culture in the Second World War* (Liverpool University Press), p. 303. Jo Fox (2006) 'Millions Like Us? Accented Language and the "Ordinary" in British Films of the Second World War', *Journal of British Studies* 45, 819.
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11. For this characterisation of CND see Parkin, *Middle Class Radicalism*.
12. Footage of the Labour Party Conference 1960, where a motion on unilateralism was passed, is available at the British Film Institute, Scarborough 3/10–5/10/60.
13. Rip Bulkeley et al. (1981) ' "If at first you don't succeed . . .": Fighting against the Bomb in the 1950s and 1960s', *International Socialism* 2, 16.
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15. Duff, *Left, Left, Left*, p. 130.

16. Peggy Duff, 'Review of Bertrand Russell's Autobiography', *Sanity* July 1969, p. 8.
17. Angus Calder (1969) *The People's War: Britain, 1939–1945* (London: Cape) and Sonya Rose (2003) *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Britain 1939–1945* (Oxford University Press).
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19. CND, 'Annual Report April 1961 to May 1962', LSE/CND/1/3, p. 1.
20. 'The First Time', *Sanity* January/February 1972, p. 3.
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22. 'Round and Round the Embassies', *Sanity* August/September 1972, p. 3.
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24. Dick Nettleton, 'But Don't Swing Too Far', *Sanity* July 1971, p. 6.
25. Tony McCarthy, 'The Price of the Market', *Sanity* July 1971, p. 3.
26. Norman Cliff, 'Against All Weapons', *Sanity* July 1971, p. 6.
27. John Minnion, 'The Shop That Sells Peace', *Sanity* October 1972, p. 7.
28. AAM, 'Minutes of the National Committee, 2 November 1960', AAM/B/2.
29. Callum Brown (2010) *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000*, rev. edn (London: Routledge), p. 176.
30. Veldman, *Fantasy, the Bomb*, p. 152.
31. Josephine Eglin (1987) 'Women and Peace: From the Suffragists to the Greenham Women', in Richard Taylor and Nigel Young (eds), *Campaigns for Peace: British Peace Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester University Press), p. 238.
32. Hinton, *Protests and Visions*, p. 157.
33. John Mattausch (1989) *A Commitment to Campaign: A Sociological Study of CND* (Manchester University Press), p. 7; original emphasis.
34. CND, 'Annual Report April 1961 to May 1962', LSE/CND/1/3, p. 5; CND, 'National Council Meeting, 16 July 1961', LSE/CND/1.
35. 'Campaign in Conference', *Sanity* July 1962, p. 2.
36. This view is given by Bulkeley et al., 'If at first you don't succeed…', p. 3. However, this is not the only interpretation of the CND symbol. It is also argued to be the 'semaphore signal for the letters N and D'. John Minnion and Philip Bolsover (1983) 'Introduction', in John Minnion and Philip Bolsover (eds), *The CND Story: The First 25 Years in the Words of the People Involved* (London: Alison & Busby), p. 16.
37. CND, 'Annual Report April 1961 to May 1962', p. 11.
38. CND, 'National Council Meeting, 27 October 1962', LSE/CND/1, pp. 2–3.
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40. 'A Festival – and a Pilgrimmage', *Sanity* March 1963.
41. CND, 'National Council Meeting, 29 October 1961', LSE/CND/1.
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60. CSJ, 'Letter to the British Sunday Press, 24 March 1964', PRONI/CSJ/D/2993/1.
61. Patricia McCluskey, 'Letter to Prime Minister Harold Wilson, 17 October 1964', PRONI/CSJ/D/2993/1.
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6 Imagining an Ideal Britain

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6. Bernard Porter (1996) 'The Empire Strikes Back', *History Today* 46, no. 9.
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42. Ross McKibbin (1998) *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918–1951* (Oxford University Press). See, in particular, ch. 6, 'Education and Mobility'.
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48. NUS, 'Annual Council Meeting April 1967', p. 52.
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57. Ibid., pp. 69–70.
58. NUS, 'Annual Council November 1969', pp. 17–18.
59. Ibid., pp. 48–9.
60. Ibid., p. 71.
61. NUS, 'Annual Council Meeting April 1970', MRC/MSS/280/NUS/87/CF, pp. 17–19.
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65. Ibid., pp. 79–80.
66. This view was prominent in the French student riots of 1968. For a discussion of this, see Michael Seidman (2004) *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968* (New York: Berghahn Books); NUS, 'Annual Council Meeting April 1970', p. 93.
67. There is, of course, a great deal of discussion and debate about the concept of 'modernity' and when the modern period began. For example, texts of 'modern' British history can begin anywhere from 1714 (see Ellis Archer Wasson (2009) *A History of Modern Britain: 1714 to the Present* (Oxford: John Wiley and Sons)) to 1914 (see Arthur Marwick (2000) *A History of the Modern British Isles, 1914–1999* (Oxford: Blackwell)) or even 1945 (see Andrew Marr (2007) *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Macmillan)).
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72. 'Two Steps Nearer', *Sanity* June 1966, pp. 4–5.
73. Michael Kennedy, 'We Should Rejoice', *Sanity* July 1967, p. 1.
74. Ibid.
75. '375,000 Babies Are Missing', *Sanity* September 1969, p. 1.; 'The End of All Children', *Sanity* September 1969, pp. 4–5.
76. Malcolm Caldwell, 'What We Neet to Do – a Policy for the Next Year', *Sanity* October 1969, p. 6.
77. There are many books devoted to Britain's 'green and pleasant' character. For a useful discussion of this attitude, see Amanda Gilroy (ed.) (2004) *Green and Pleasant Land: English Culture and the Romantic Countryside* (Leuven: Peeters).
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9 Addressing 'Race' in Britain

1. There is debate about racism being simply a legacy of empire or the result of geography as the island nation as Great Britain did not have to 'mix' with people of different cultural, ethnic or racial backgrounds. There is an extensive debate about the passing of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. For a starting point into this debate, see Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain*; Spencer, *British Immigration Policy since 1939*; Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration* and notes in Introduction.
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