

Battles on the Barbican: the Struggle for Trade Unionism in the British Building Industry, 1965–7

by *Charlie McGuire, Linda Clarke and
Christine Wall*

The demands of the Building Workers' Charter, launched in April 1970, were: £1 an hour basic rate for a thirty-five hour week; three (later four) weeks of holiday plus the statutory holidays; a fully comprehensive pension scheme; total opposition to 'lump' labour; decasualization of the industry and the registration of workers; the introduction and rigid enforcement of adequate safety and health regulations; democratization of the trade unions; nationalization and public ownership of the building industry; and a single building union.¹ Such a charter was not new: it had surfaced in various forms in the history of the building industry since the repeal of the Combinations Act in 1824, and more recently in 1944 in a pamphlet, anticipating nationalization, authored by Luke Fawcett of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers (AUBTW).² But why did the Charter reappear in this period and why did its particular demands appeal to building workers all over Britain?

The roots of the 1970 Charter lie in another rank-and-file organization, the London Joint Sites Committee (LJSC), brought to life in 1965 by building workers during a series of long and sometimes bitter disputes on the Barbican redevelopment, which eventually culminated in a year-long lock-out on Phase 4, where Myton was the contractor. These disputes not only highlighted the processes of change that had affected the structure of the industry and the building labour process since the war but also exposed the most pressing grievances of building workers and pointed to the need for a new form of organization if trade unionism in the construction industry was to survive and thrive. A wedge was dug between building-site activists and trade-union officials and the death knell sounded for the federation of craft and general unions that had proved inadequate to adapt to changes in the industry and the emergence of a multitude of new occupations.

*North Lindsey College, Scunthorpe
University of Westminster, London
University of Westminster*

*charlie.mcguire@northlindsey.ac.uk
clarkel@wmin.ac.uk
c.wall@wmin.ac.uk*



**Fig. 1. Crane erectors on Laing Barbican site.
Photograph by John Steeden, reproduced with his permission.**

Gaining strength and momentum as a result of this weakness in the formal trade-union structures, the LJSC pushed for fundamental change and anticipated the formation of a single construction-workers' union, albeit one radically different from that which eventually appeared in 1971. It was centrally involved in a series of other disputes towards the end of the decade and played a seminal role in the founding of the Building Workers' Charter in 1970. And this, in turn, was critical to the organization of the 1972 building workers' strike, one of the most celebrated and successful national strikes in construction,³ meticulously organized and largely led by an unofficial network of activists and shop-stewards, many from the Building Workers' Charter movement.

The Barbican disputes provoked much hostile comment from the media at the time and were eventually the subject of a government Court of Inquiry. In contrast to the 1972 strike, they have tended to slip from historical memory and to be overlooked by virtually all historians of that period, even labour-movement specialists. So too has the 1963 national building workers' strike, the first for forty years, with its claim for a reduction in hours from forty-two to forty per week and a 1s 6d per hour increase, which brought out 60,000 workers and stopped 800 sites.⁴ Situated between the two national strikes, the significance of the Barbican disputes in consolidating labour demands for improvement and indeed in providing a vision for the future of how the industry could and should be organized, thus shaping the industrial relations landscape in the ensuing period, has yet to be fully understood. Using a combination of published and unpublished documentary sources, including oral history interviews with building workers who were involved, this article is a first attempt to chart and analyse the reasons for and consequences of the Barbican disputes of 1965–7, and thereby to assess their significance.

ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CONTEXT

The mid 1960s was a period of slowing economic growth, which the new Labour government, elected in 1964, was unable to remedy. Two measures in particular affected the construction industry: the introduction of Selective Employment Tax in 1966, which led many construction firms to favour sub-contracted labour rather than directly employed; and a policy of restraint, institutionalized in the form of the Prices and Income Board, which involved a cut in public investment of £150 million and a six-month wages standstill.⁵ Recognizing that the long postwar economic boom had come to an end and in the light of a growing number of capital-labour conflicts, particularly unofficial disputes (an estimated ninety-five percent of strikes were unofficial),⁶ the Labour government sought an alternative. The shop-stewards committees were seen to be responsible for these disputes and the new Minister of Labour, Ray Gunter, inaugurated his tenure by describing the prospect of an unofficial dock strike as leading to 'anarchy'.⁷ As a result, and in order to allow both union leaders and employers to

reassert control over these rank-and-file elements, a new industrial framework was pursued, beginning with a Royal Commission on Trade Unions, set up in 1965 and headed by Lord Donovan. The Donovan Commission set out to create a collective bargaining framework that could best secure industrial peace, lamenting what it regarded as a twin system of industrial relations, one headed by the national trade-union bureaucracies and the other by rank-and-file workplace activists.

Two separate systems were in operation. The 'formal' system involved nationally agreed rates of pay and conditions negotiated by trade-union officials, whilst, under the 'informal' system, local or workplace deals were negotiated by shop-stewards. A series of proposals for bringing the latter more under control of the former would later be put forward by the Royal Commission. In their submissions to the Commission, employers' organizations set out demands that included registration of all unions and the removal of immunity from prosecution of unregistered organizations and unions engaged in strike action. All this stoked fears among trade unionists that a clampdown on their rights and liberties was in the offing.⁸ The wider strategy of the government, with its aim of bringing unofficial workplace movements and militants to heel, strengthened the employers' position while nurturing concerns among trade-union activists that would be reflected in the industrial disputes on the Barbican. But much more was also involved, including unworkable bonus systems, poor trade-union representation, new and untried methods and equipment, a lack of appropriate training, and the use of labour-only sub-contractors. All these lay behind the reappearance of the Charter and justify reconsidering accounts of industrial relations of the period.

THE BARBICAN AND ITS WORKERS

Designed by the architects, Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, the Barbican plan was for an innovative combination of housing and landscaping, as well as a school, business centre and arts centre, spread out over forty acres and all constructed of high-quality concrete. The location, Cripplegate Ward on the edge of the City of London, had largely been destroyed during World War Two and in 1951 was home to just twenty-eight people.⁹ The scheme was designed for mixed use and included high density housing, aimed mainly at middle and higher income brackets, with pedestrian access and entirely separate from the surrounding roadways. The Barbican would be completed in six phases. The first involved the construction of Milton Court, which housed various public-service buildings and thirteen maisonettes designated for City staff.¹⁰ The main housing developments, phases 2, 3 and 4, all started in 1964–5 and were built respectively by Turriff Ltd, John Laing and Sons, and Myton (a subsidiary of construction giants Taylor Woodrow). Phase 5, the Barbican Arts Centre built by Laing, and phase 5A, the final residential tower built by Robert McAlpine Ltd., began in the early 1970s. The whole scheme was an enormous undertaking, constructed

largely of *in-situ* concrete – a material well-known in civil engineering but not usually employed so extensively on such an architecturally complex scheme.

The workers who built the Barbican worked in an industry that was in a process of rapid change. The technological advance evident throughout British industry in this period and the increased mechanization of the building process had contributed to consistent increases in building output from the late 1940s to the mid 1960s,¹¹ when, out of the twenty-six million in the UK workforce, around 1.77 million were employed in construction.¹² The number of large sites and contracts grew and they became far more complex in their organization. So too did the number of large firms: those with twelve hundred or more operatives increased their share of total contractors' output to twenty-one percent by 1965, while the share of those with no more than 114 operatives fell to forty-six percent.¹³

The new production methods and technologies, particularly the widespread use of concrete and the mechanization of the building process, also broke down some of the distinctions between craft and non-craft workers. Many new specialisms emerged, especially through the deployment of a vast array of light and heavy plant operation, including concreting, crane-driving and steel-fixing, and in scaffolding, which grew increasingly complex as buildings became bigger and their construction more intricate.¹⁴ The number of bricklayers declined, from 117,000 in 1945 to 109,000 by 1963, while those employed in administrative, clerical and technical occupations rose, by forty-three percent between 1961 and 1966 alone – from 157,000 to 225,000.¹⁵ Despite the introduction of the Construction Industry Training Board in 1964, whose training effort anyway remained concentrated on the traditional trades, the number of apprentices declined, plummeting from 109,200 in 1963 to 75,000 by 1970.¹⁶

Trade-union organization had not kept pace with these structural changes in the industry and suffered as a result. Members were split up into twenty-one organizations, mainly along craft lines, with large general unions recruiting most of those designated as non-craft workers, including many who worked in the new occupations. The main unions were: the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (ASW), which organized carpenters and joiners and was by far the biggest craft union in the industry; the AUBTW, mostly bricklayers along with non-craft workers; the Amalgamated Society of Painters and Decorators (ASPD); and the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) which organized in both the building and civil-engineering industries.

The unions belonged to an umbrella organization, the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives (NFBTO), which, along with the National Federation of Building Trade Employers (NFBTE), negotiated through the National Joint Council for the Building Industry (NJCBI) the pay and conditions for the building side of the construction industry, incorporated in the National Working Rule Agreement (NWRA).¹⁷ Despite a rise

in the overall number of workers in construction, membership of unions affiliated to the NFBTO fell, from 450,722 in 1957 to 417,910 by 1965, when it represented just twenty-eight percent of the industry labour force.¹⁸ By the mid 1950s, it was estimated that the AUBTW alone was losing 5,000 members per year.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the number of working days in construction lost for disputes – both official and even more so unofficial – remained high throughout the 1960s, with unofficial stoppages averaging at least one day per worker between 1955 and 1964.²⁰ Indeed of twenty-six sites examined for the 1968 National Board for Prices and Incomes report, six were ‘closed shops’, on nine the majority of workers were trade-union members, whilst eleven had low membership levels.²¹

For the employers, trade unions were not strong and equal partners in negotiation but simply subservient associates whose main value lay in their potential to discipline more militant members.²² While involved in the industry’s collective-bargaining structures, employers were nonetheless willing on occasion to shut down entire sites and to sack and blacklist workers so as to remove targeted shop-stewards and activists from the industry. There was an example of this in 1958 at the Shell-Mex site on London’s South Bank, then one of the largest construction projects in Britain, when Robert McAlpine, the contractor, sacked the entire workforce of 1,250 in order to remove trade-union activists from the site. This led to unofficial picketing and the eventual expulsion of some of the workers from their unions.²³

There had also been significant change in wage and employment systems. Whilst the majority of large firms in the industry conformed to the NWRA and regarded the rates as a standard to be improved on, small firms were more inclined to treat them as minima.²⁴ This was however a period of serious wage drift, attributable in part to alterations in hours but above all to piecework incentive schemes and bonus, which had since 1947 been part of the NWRA.²⁵ At a time when building workers’ rates of pay were slipping behind those of other industrial workers,²⁶ incentive payments were increasingly valuable, especially for workers on large sites, where bonus could often double or even treble pay. As in other industries, this had the unintended effect of boosting the power of shop-stewards and works committees, as it was they, not the full-time trade-union officials, who negotiated agreements with employers on bonus pay.²⁷

Associated with the spread of bonus payments as well as the declining importance of the traditional trades, and of further concern in the building industry at the time of the Barbican development, was the exponential rise in labour-only sub-contracting (LOSC).²⁸ LOSC, or ‘lump’ labour, was a form of wage contract whereby a contractor would hire workers on a labour-only ‘self-employed’ basis and pay them an agreed ‘lump’ sum for an agreed amount of work. LOSC workers performed the same tasks on site for the same contractors as did directly employed workers. The contractor hiring ‘lump’ workers could avoid responsibility towards them in terms of

income-tax deduction or regarding payment of National Insurance contributions, holiday pay, sick pay, or pensions. ‘Lump’ workers could therefore receive a higher rate of pay than their directly employed counterparts. They also had an incentive to finish the work as quickly as possible and often took little interest in health and safety considerations, site conditions or the training of apprentices.

Given that the basic role of building-trade unions was to bargain for better pay and conditions and for control over the length of the working day, as well as to enrol the next generation of members into their ranks through their involvement in the apprenticeship schemes, the growth of the ‘lump’ posed a clear challenge. By 1965, numbers ‘on the lump’ were estimated at 200,000; they rose to 400,000 by 1973, and the use of LOSC was found to be especially prevalent in medium and large firms, in small firms with large contracts,²⁹ and in the traditional trades, above all bricklaying, roofing, floor-laying and plastering.³⁰ The rise of ‘lump’ labour in the building industry goes some way to explain why, at a time when objective conditions should have favoured trade-union growth, the main building unions were actually in a process of decline.³¹

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES ON THE BARBICAN

From the very beginning, industrial disputes occurred on the Barbican sites, reflecting employers’ attempts to assert managerial prerogative in everything relating to wages and employment as well as the deeper processes of change in the industry. The first major strike took place on the £6 million Turriff site in September–October 1965 and had its roots in the determination of the workers to maintain a fully unionized site or ‘closed shop’ on the Barbican as a way to block casualization. The Turriff workforce walked out following the refusal of a small number of sub-contract carpenters to take part in a union-card check meant to ensure that no non-union or ‘lump’ labour had been hired. All 380 workers were promptly sacked, and the company announced that they would be replaced by strike-breaking, non-union labour.

In a move indicative of its approach to industrial relations, Turriff stepped back in time to resurrect one of the most notorious practices of the building-industry employers by insisting that the new workers sign the ‘Document’, a declaration that they would never strike, ban overtime or engage in a work-to-rule. The ‘Document’ had first appeared in the 1830s, with variations used from that point on by employers during strikes and lock-outs until the early decades of the twentieth century.³² Its reappearance in the 1960s on one of the highest-profile sites in London set the scene for an extension of the dispute; within a week, over 2,000 building workers, employed on four of the biggest sites in London, had struck in sympathy.³³ Pickets were placed at the entrance to the site, preventing Turriff from sending in the replacement workers.³⁴ Pressure increased when a regional disputes commission – an arbitration board made up of employer and union

representatives and held under the auspices of the NWRA – found in favour of the workforce and instructed they be re-employed. Turriff countered however that, as new workers had already been recruited, they could not re-employ the sacked men.³⁵

The situation turned violent at the beginning of October 1965 when lorries trying to take in non-union labour were confronted by a large number of pickets. Vic Heath, then a scaffolder on the Turriff site who was shop-steward and chairman of the works committee, has vivid recollections of this, recalling the large police presence and how the workers ‘pelted the coach with rocks, smashing it to bits’.³⁶ Six pickets were arrested by police. In the aftermath, the London management committee of the ASW met and urged the national leadership of the union to declare the strike official. The committee also met with thirty shop-stewards from sites all over London and agreed that the site be blacked until Turriff should accept the decision of the disputes commission.³⁷ The arguments in favour of this were made clear:

Behind this dispute is Turriff’s decision to bring in labour-only sub-contractors – groups of men without plant or materials – who contract to do the job at a specified price and are not party to trade-union agreements . . . Trade-union conditions go by the board as the gangs work round the clock to finish a particular job at piecework rates and then move on to another job.³⁸

Eventually the various unions involved and the NFBTO declared the strike official. Turriff’s efforts to keep the site open with non-union labour appeared ever closer to failure when, after a meeting with local district trade-union officials and shop-stewards, the replacement workers walked off the site. Turriff eventually conceded defeat and offered to re-employ all sacked men. The ‘Document’ was withdrawn and it was accepted by Turriff that all employees must either be union members or be ‘willing to join one’.³⁹

The Turriff strike was an important dispute because it took place at a time when union organization was weakening in many areas, and when, at the behest of the major contractors, non-union ‘lump’ labour was making serious inroads. Workers on the Barbican were of the view that only 100% unionization could combat the threat posed to their interests. The strike was also significant for the degree of unity in evidence between all workers on the site regardless of occupation and for the widespread support received from building workers on other sites and in other cities, such as Liverpool and Manchester.⁴⁰ But the crucial development of this strike was the formation of the LJSC, which according to activists was set up during this dispute to improve conditions in the industry, encouraging large numbers of building workers to take part in various forms of industrial action, including strike action, for what was seen as the principle of trade-union organization in the industry.⁴¹



Fig. 2. Turriff strikers, October 1965; Lou Lewis appears on the right. Vic Heath collection, with his kind permission.



Fig. 3. Mass picket at Myton site, following attempt to break strike. *Morning Star*, 4 April 1967.

THE MYTON LOCK-OUT

The Turriff strike was described by London building workers as the ‘biggest battle for years’,⁴² but an even bigger one was already brewing on Myton’s £5.5 million Barbican site. Labour relations on this site were poor from the beginning. Difficulties were sparked off by Myton’s attempts to introduce sub-contract scaffolders and steel-fixers on to the site in early August 1966. This led to a wider dispute involving all workers on that site, which resulted in the sacking of twelve steel-fixers, ten of whom got their jobs back.⁴³ The Myton site had a strong shop-stewards works committee, made up of representatives from three of the main building unions (the AUBTW, the ASW and the TGWU). There was also an NFBTO federation steward, elected by the other sectional stewards, who assisted them in negotiations.⁴⁴ The key figure was twenty-eight-year-old carpenter Lou Lewis, originally from Liverpool, who was a member of the ASW and also a leading light in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). Lewis started on the Myton site in the spring of 1966, following three years’ employment on the nearby Paternoster development, and was soon elected as both ASW and NFBTO steward.⁴⁵

Industrial relations on the Myton site deteriorated further towards the end of September, when another dispute occurred involving the scaffolders, this time related to bonus payments. According to the scaffolder shop-steward, Michael Houlihan, the bonus system in operation at that point was complex and operated in the favour of the employers:

We had a very complicated and unworkable kind of a system. Well, it was workable for the management because it was so complicated that they could interpret the targets as they wished, and which they did and which I put a stop to eventually.⁴⁶

Houlihan successfully argued for a system based on linear footage, a more common form of scaffolding bonus on sites. However, Myton rejected his proposed preamble to the bonus scheme, to the effect that workers would receive a bonus if production slowed down through management’s inability to organize the job properly.⁴⁷ Agreement could not be reached and in September a work-to-rule began, soon spreading to all workers on the site and drastically retarding production. Myton then sacked three steel-fixers, a move that provoked an all-out strike on the site, beginning on 21 October 1966. Myton responded by issuing redundancy notices to the entire workforce.

The NFBTO leadership then became involved in the dispute, and argued for a return to work on the understanding that the issue be dealt with by a disputes commission. The Myton works committee accepted this decision and on 3 November there was a return to work involving about half the workforce. The following day, however, Myton refused to withdraw the redundancy notices and closed the site down. The action seemed puzzling

but was later justified by Myton contracts manager, J. W. Raikes, who said that he had been considering closing the site for some time before October as a result of the high level of labour stoppages and because he 'did not want to employ men who were outside the control of their union'.⁴⁸ However, the works committee, made up of six shop-stewards including Lewis and Houlihan, disputed this, arguing that Myton's real motive was the wish to rid the site of union activists altogether, in order to introduce bonus cuts in the region of £7 week.⁴⁹

The Myton workforce received considerable support. Workers from a large number of other London sites, including the Turriff and Laing Barbican sites, the Horseferry Road government-building contract and the Brunel University site, all joined the picket lines. Shop-stewards committees in Manchester, all parts of London, Glasgow and Liverpool also sent their support and raised money for the strikers. That the strike had captured public attention and thrown the spotlight on major problems in the building industry could also be seen with the BBC television broadcast of Jim Allen's *The 'Lump'* on 1 February 1967. This play followed the fortunes of Yorkie, a socialist trade-union steward who is sacked and blacklisted following his efforts to establish good health and safety conditions on the sites. Yorkie is eventually forced on to the lump and is employed by ruthless gangers before being killed in a collapsed trench.⁵⁰

More than most strikes of the period, the Barbican dispute casts a spotlight on the growing gap between union officials and shop-stewards. Initially the local leaders of two of the three unions involved, the AUBTW and TGWU,⁵¹ declared the strike official and issued strike pay. But these decisions had not been ratified by the national leaderships, who soon reversed them. While sympathy for the workers remained among trade-union officials at regional or district levels, at national leadership level there was growing resentment at the way in which site activists on the Barbican appeared to be undermining their position. The Turriff strike had eventually won support from the union leaders, but one year on they were concerned at the degree of independence that the site stewards seemed to have. George Smith, leader of the ASW, gave vent to these feelings when he criticized the Myton strike leaders as 'little Caesars' who were manipulating the membership for their own purposes.⁵²

The media also condemned the strike and began to vilify the works committee. Jim Allen and Ken Loach may have enjoyed their first breaks on national TV at this time, but it was still the era of films like *I'm All Right Jack*, TV series such as the *Rag Trade*, and demonization in the popular press of activists like Longbridge shop-steward Derek 'Red Robbo' Robinson, none of which portrayed trade unionists in a positive light. The London *Evening News* ran a series of articles on the strike, blaming it on a small group of communist agitators who had 'infiltrated' the sites,⁵³ while the *Daily Mail* published a full-page article on Lou Lewis, complete with photograph, under the headline 'This smiling man, who halts the building

of a village within the city'.⁵⁴ The remaining five committee members, Houlihan, Chris Taylor, Rolph Langdon, Kevin Synott and Chris Noble were also named and blamed for causing the strike. Attention began to focus on the LJSC, which, it was claimed, had been set up by communists to provoke mayhem on sites all over the capital and was responsible for the strikes at the Barbican. The committee was described as a 'mysterious, shapeless organization', whose aims were 'to usurp the authority of the trade unions; to undermine the government's economic policy; and to rekindle left-wing attitudes towards employers'.⁵⁵

The LJSC for its part did play a role in gathering support for the action from workers all over London. The committee had around eighty active members, site activists from a number of large and small London sites, and an indeterminate number of less active supporters from sites across London.⁵⁶ At its height it met regularly, normally every fortnight, in the Metropolitan pub in Farringdon Road.⁵⁷ Members came from a wide variety of building-trade occupations (carpenters, bricklayers, painters, plumbers, concrete-workers, electricians, machine-operators, steel-fixers, scaffolders and numerous types of non-craft workers) and included shop-stewards, works-committee members and most of the Federation stewards from London's biggest sites, such as Lewis, Jack Henry from the Horseferry Road site, Mick McGowan from the Brunel University site and Bob Gordon, who was employed on the South Bank arts complex.

The LJSC had a clear structure (elected secretary, treasurer and chair and so on) and an aim to organize sites and provide solidarity and support for any workers on strike or in dispute with their employers. But some of its objectives went deeper.⁵⁸ The leading activists were critical of what they saw as the weak, right-wing leadership of the main building unions and the current state of union organization. They saw the LJSC as an 'antidote' to this and a force for change in the unions, both politically and organizationally.⁵⁹ One demand that began to gather support was for a single construction union, composed of all craft and non-craft workers and not under the control of any one occupation. While not all LJSC members held to this view, being at this stage more concerned about fully democratizing the existing unions and removing the leaders, increasingly – and in light of the Turriff dispute – the best way to win victories was seen as bringing all workers off the job, regardless of trade or occupation, and building the unity needed in organizational terms.

The LJSC leadership included CPGB activists and around half of its members were in the party.⁶⁰ CPGB members also held key positions in the works committees of all three Barbican sites and on many other sites in London. On the Myton site, for instance, two members of the committee – Lewis and Houlihan – were in the party, the latter joining during the strike; a third member, Rolph Langdon, joined shortly after the end of the strike. However, at the same time, one Myton works-committee member, Irishman Kevin Synott, was a strong Catholic and anti-Communist.⁶¹ While

Communists certainly played an important role, therefore, the LJSC was primarily concerned with improvements in pay, conditions and union structures; as Lewis himself put it:

The working man does not go for politics, he goes for his money. If the steward uses political influence and the men lose money, they will soon get rid of him.⁶²

The emergence and continued momentum of the LJSC during and after the Turriff lock-out was of critical importance in the history of building-trade unionism, and one of the developments that gives the Barbican disputes such significance. Its existence flagged up not only the harsh conditions that building workers faced and the employers' often primitive approach to industrial relations, but also the failures of the building unions to adapt to the changes occurring in the industry and to stem the sharp decline in membership. Whilst union leaders negotiated national agreements, an increasing part of the wage package took the form of incentive bonuses, bargained for by site stewards and dependent on site organization. For many workers at the time there was a clear correlation between, on the one hand, pay and conditions and, on the other, the degree of site organization.⁶³ The distinctions between craft and non-craft workers were in any case breaking down as a result of changes in the labour process, including the increased use of heavy machinery and materials such as concrete and steel.

It is significant that the Myton lock-out originated in a dispute involving scaffolders. This occupation was increasingly important to the construction industry but – as also with steel-fixers, concrete-workers and machine-operators – not yet recognized as 'skilled' (training and graded qualifications were introduced only in 1974 through the Scaffolders Record Scheme).⁶⁴ This meant that the basic NWRA pay rate for these workers was not a 'craft' rate and so was lower. As shown by the large-scale 1966 Building Research Station survey of 'Building Operatives' Work', much of the work done by those classified as 'labourers', such as concreters, concrete-finishers, and drain-layers, was in fact specialized and skilled, and involved an increasing proportion of the workforce, while those in the main apprenticeship trades (carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers, painters, etc.) were undertaking work other than that traditionally associated with their trade.⁶⁵ This reality was at odds with the continued separation of workers into a scattering of craft bodies and two large general unions.⁶⁶

As the strike moved past its third month, attempts were made by the union leaders and Myton to find a solution. At a meeting on 14 February 1967 a three-point agreement was reached to reopen the site. This included a new bonus system, site procedure for shop-stewards and re-employment of all workers, bar the six works-committee members whose fate would be decided by a disputes commission. The strike leaders, infuriated in particular

WOULD YOU SCAB

For the past 22 weeks the lads on Myton's Site, Barbican Re-Development, have conducted a struggle in defence of Trade Union organisation and against victimisation.

On the 14th February an agreement was made between the employers and National Officers of the Unions involved for the Site to re-open on 20th February. Re-employment was offered to all operatives with the exception of the Works Committee. The Myton lads who had been offered re-employment voted unanimously against returning to work without their Shop Stewards.

The Myton Management, with the help of certain Trade Union Officials, are now proposing to re-open the Site on 29th March with a new labour force, including non-unionists, if this can be found.

We the operatives of the Laing's & Turriff Sites, Barbican Re-Development, on which approximately 1,000 Trade Union members are employed, have taken a unanimous decision to support Myton's pickets in the event of a NEW LABOUR FORCE being introduced.

Building workers will refuse to break this 22-week-old dispute on the Myton's Site, and where possible we call on you to support a mass picket at Myton's gate on Wednesday, 29th March, from 7 a.m. onwards.

Express your opposition to a sell-out by forwarding resolutions through the branches to the E.C's and District Committees.

**VICTORY FOR MYTON'S WORKERS WILL SAFEGUARD
YOU FROM SIMILAR ATTACKS!!!**

**Published by: Unanimous Decision of Trade Union members,
Turriff & Laing's Sites,
Barbican Re-Development, E.C.1.**

Fig. 4. Leaflet produced by Myton strike committee, March 1967.
Vic Heath collection, with his kind permission.

by the last proviso, rejected this agreement, which they saw as a victory for the contractor. When Myton officials, accompanied by NFBTO London Regional Secretary Len Eaton, arrived at the site to reopen it six days later, they encountered a picket of several hundred workers from all three Barbican sites and were forced to retreat.⁶⁷ A regional disputes commission was held the following week, but was unable to reach a decision on re-employment of the six stewards. It passed the matter on to a national disputes commission, at which Myton, the three unions involved, and the works committee all gave evidence. Myton blamed the works-committee members, justifying the decision not to re-employ them with the claim that they had shown 'scant respect' for the working-rule agreement, taken part in 'unofficial picketing', 'seriously abused' their power to influence others and presented as much a threat to the unions as to the employers.⁶⁸

Represented in the main by divisional or local officials, most of whom were sympathetic to the strike, the three unions rejected Myton's arguments.⁶⁹ The TGWU claimed that the sacking of the three steel-fixers was designed to frighten the rest of the workforce and weaken their organization. The AUBTW argued that the real problem was the decision by Myton to impose an inadequate bonus scheme on the scaffolders. And the ASW criticized Myton's approach to industrial relations, stressing the absence of a labour-relations officer until shortly before the start of the lock-out and condemning the company's intransigence on pay and conditions. However, the national disputes commission panel broadly accepted Myton's case, ruling that the six strike leaders had acted 'contrary' to NJCBI regulations and 'defied' their own organizations by continuing to picket the site after an agreement to reopen it had been reached. They therefore recommended that the site be reopened on the basis of the 14 February agreement and that the six remain sacked.⁷⁰

After this decision, the union leaders stepped up their efforts to end the strike. In mid March a joint NFBTO and Myton press statement was released warning workers that, if they did not resume work by the end of the month, Myton would be free to recruit a new workforce.⁷¹ On 3 April a contingent of scab labour (recruited from nearby labour exchanges and bussed in with police assistance) was again met by several hundred pickets and forced to retreat. Letters were sent to all members insisting they cease picketing the Barbican and warning that those who refused to do so could face expulsion from their unions.

However, the six Myton stewards had significant support within the rank and file of the movement, especially in London, and a meeting in April of the ASW London shop-stewards council, attended by seventy-one stewards, called on the union leaders to refrain from attacking and start supporting the Myton strike leaders.⁷² At the annual conference of the AUBTW, the following month, London divisional secretary Joe Rootes praised the Myton stewards for 'standing firm' in the face of 'the most callous attacks' and claimed they had support 'throughout the great part of London'.⁷³

The leaders were again criticized at the ASW conference soon after. One leading activist, Alan Tattam, voiced his support for the Barbican workers and lambasted the ASW leadership's inability to do anything about poor wages, the rise of 'lump' labour or falling membership levels, which had declined by 6,000 in two years.⁷⁴ In short, the lock-out on the Barbican had revealed a fault-line between activists and leaders in the building unions, which only deepened when, in May 1967, both Lewis and Langdon were expelled by the ASW leaders for their refusal to cease picketing at the site. Jack Rusca, a local full-time official in the union was also sacked from his post, following the decision of the ASW London District Committee to give hardship grants to the Barbican workers and those on strike at Horseferry Road. Three other members of that committee were also suspended.

With little prospect of a settlement, the government convened a Court of Inquiry, charging it to investigate the background to the strike and to formulate recommendations for its solution. The lock-out at the new government-building site on Horseferry Road, which had started around the same time as the Myton strike following conflict between the contractor, Sunley and Co, and shop-stewards on the site, was also subject to investigation by the Court. Sunley's attempt to have workers clock on and its determination to end a collective bonus scheme in operation on the pre-cast concrete yard had been the flash-point for a major show-down and the sacking of the entire workforce. Sunley directors later alleged that the NFBTO President, Jack Mills, had met with them and indicated that they should present these terms to the men, but, unusually, no minutes were taken at this meeting, so there is no way to verify what did actually happen. It is claimed, however, that Sunley, well behind on this contract and facing daily penalty costs as well as a doubling of its estimated wage bill, provoked strike action at Horseferry Road a few days later, in an attempt not only to provide a fig-leaf for the sacking of the works committee (led by two well-known activists, Hugh Cassidy and Jack Henry), but also to provide the possible grounds for terminating the contract altogether.⁷⁵

The Court of Inquiry into the Barbican and Horseferry Road disputes took place in June and consisted of Lord John Cameron, J. P. Lowry (director of the Engineering Employers Federation) and Daniel McGarvey (leader of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions). But while government, employers, trade-union leaders and the popular press had all pointed the finger at shop-stewards and works committees as the source of industrial-relations difficulties, it soon became clear at the Cameron Committee that Myton's problems had nothing at all to do with its workforce.

Myton had previously argued that the actions of the shop-stewards had caused the firm to close the site but now, in evidence to Cameron, the company admitted that the construction designs were far more complex

than had appeared on the outline architects' drawings upon which they had based their initial tender. In addition, contradictory and late instructions and numerous changes to the designs had also been passed down from the architects, disrupting the work programme considerably and requiring completed work to be taken down and replaced.⁷⁶ A slowdown in the pace of work as a result of these delays meant that Myton would lose money and the workers' bonus levels would be affected. Myton's argument was similar to that made by former Turriff site-agent, John Justice, in an interview a few months earlier with *Construction News*. He pointed out that, while the company's original tender had been based on a provisional Bill of Quantities and just fifty or sixty drawings from the architects, in the event the firm had to deal with thousands of drawings and a continuous procession of building instructions.⁷⁷ Turriff by this stage had been on the Barbican for three years, in a contract that was supposed to be finished the following year, but was only half-way through the work required. It also emerged that Laing was already thirty weeks behind on its phase 3 contract, and that the Myton site, already in operation for eighteen months, had only just got out of the ground.

From the emerging evidence to the Cameron Inquiry it seemed that the whole Barbican project had suffered from deficiencies in its planning and organization, and from difficulties faced by the professionals, from the architects to the contractors, in coping with a contract of such complexity. Already, the estimated cost of the development had gone up from £20 million to an estimated £36 million.⁷⁸ *Construction News* described the original estimate for the development as 'fairytale optimism', arguing that a full inquiry was necessary,⁷⁹ while a leading member of the City of London Corporation, Sir Edward Howard, speculated that the eventual cost might be around £50 million.⁸⁰ *The Times* also called for an investigation into the entire tendering process and organization of the Barbican redevelopment contracts.⁸¹

Cameron, however, did not address any of these issues, commenting that his remit was simply to look at the strike and rejecting the view that it was interconnected with wider problems facing the Barbican development or the industry in general. He declined to ask for evidence from the architects or the City of London Corporation. In September 1967, after a gap of three months, he finally issued his report. Myton was subjected to light criticism, mainly for the breakdown in communications between the works committee and management and for failure to withdraw the notices of dismissal it had sent out to those workers whom the unions were encouraging to return to work.⁸² But the thrust of the report was directed against the strikers and at the LJSC, which was seen as the cause of the dispute, both 'mischievous and subversive not only of good labour relations on the sites in question, but of the authority and influence of the unions concerned'.⁸³ Lou Lewis was singled out for special criticism, with his evidence cast as 'bizarre and incredible' and not intended to be believed.⁸⁴

Cameron's two major concerns were the 'degree of ignorance which apparently obtained amongst union officials as to what in fact was occurring

on these sites' and 'the extent to which power and real authority had passed into the hands of the shop-stewards and the works committees without effective union control'. The report recommended that the NFBTO and NFBTE should alter the NWRA in respect of election of the works committees and the federation stewards. The NFBTO in particular was advised to take greater control of the electoral process and to initiate regulations that would make it more difficult for a rank-and-file body to hold a position of power and would allow stewards in breach of these regulations to be removed from office. It was also recommended that a new works committee be appointed by union leaders at each of the Barbican sites, pending new elections. Minutes of their meetings were to be supplied to the NFBTO regional secretary within forty-eight hours. The refusal of Myton to re-employ the six works committee members was endorsed by Cameron and a recommendation made that the site be opened inside four weeks.

Strongly condemned by the workers, the Cameron Report was nevertheless the beginning of the end for the Myton strike and paved the way for even closer collaboration between employers and trade-union leaders. A full-page advertisement, published in several national newspapers and signed by the leaders of the three unions involved along with the NFBTO and NFBTE leaders, denounced the strike and the strike leaders. It declared that there 'was no strike' now at the Barbican, that agreements between management and the unions on all outstanding issues had been reached, that the site was open, and that trade-union members were free to work there with the support of their organizations. The pickets were condemned as a 'few unrepresentative individuals' whose actions were 'disgraceful' and whose real agenda was the 'undermining of the authority of the properly-elected trade-union representatives'.⁸⁵ A few weeks before this, both Harry Weaver (General Secretary of the NFBTO) and Len Eaton had been ejected from the Turriff and Laing sites following their attempts to persuade the workers there to accept the Cameron Report.⁸⁶ On 16 October a major effort was made to reopen the site, with a huge police presence to protect strike-breakers. Violence erupted and many workers were beaten and arrested by police; one allegedly suffered a broken arm in the back of a police van.⁸⁷

A protest march was called by strike leaders for 2 November, the day those arrested were due to appear in court, which was attended by about 500 building workers and supporters, including two coach-loads from Liverpool and Manchester. But at the rally that followed, Lewis unexpectedly announced that the picketing of the site was going to end and the dispute was effectively over. In his speech, Lewis said they had achieved as much as was possible against the combined forces of the employers, trade-union leaders and government, arguing that support had not waned and that the 'connivance and collaboration' of the union leaders with the employers had not broken the resolve or the determination of the workers. Michael Houlihan regarded the union leadership's collaboration with employers during this dispute as 'the most blatant sell-out imaginable',⁸⁸ but agreed

with the decision to end the picket, as did all of the works committee members, since no more could be achieved by continuing it:

The hostility was of such a nature that it was affecting our families. It was affecting everybody, and we just had to say, 'well look, we'll go out of here as dignified as we started. We'll go out with our heads held high'. We fought the good fight, and because the forces arraigned against us were of such, you know, power and influence, that we just couldn't withstand it, I mean, anymore.⁸⁹

AFTERMATH

In the short term, the outcome of the Barbican strike appeared to strengthen the employers. Frank Taylor, managing director of Taylor Woodrow, declared publicly that none of the six strike-committee members would ever work again for his company, or any of their subsidiaries, on any site. This blacklisting was replicated by most of the large firms in the industry, making it exceptionally difficult for the sacked men to gain employment. In January 1968 Lewis and Langdon were each fired from major London sites once their identities became known.⁹⁰ Michael Houlihan was unemployed for around two years after the Myton strike. He recalls the clerk at Poplar Labour Exchange phoning dozens of scaffolding firms on his behalf, but being unable to find anyone willing to hire him:

He phoned this firm, that firm. He phoned Taylor Woodrow and they said quite openly, 'Not only will we not employ Mr Houlihan in London, but nowhere in the United Kingdom'.⁹¹

The members and district officials expelled or sacked by the union leaders, however, were all soon reinstated into their organizations, including Lewis. Houlihan also fended off an attempt by the union leaders to expel him from the AUBTW. More significantly, the LJSC and the network of activists built up during the Turriff and Myton disputes did not disappear. As former LJSC activist Ken Beddoe pointed out, the committee continued to develop and to build on the organization that had been established during the Barbican strike,⁹² and was involved again in less serious disputes on both the Turriff and Myton sites during 1968–9.⁹³ The Committee also led significant building-worker opposition in London to the decision of the Prices and Income Board to reduce pay levels in 1968, and in 1970 it played a leading role in another strike on the Barbican when Robert McAlpine tried to introduce non-union labour.⁹⁴ Finally, in the spring of 1970 the LJSC joined up with site committees in Manchester and Liverpool – links that had also been built and strengthened during the Barbican disputes – to launch the Building Workers' Charter.

The Charter movement had been planned by London activists for some time and enjoyed early success. Lou Lewis edited the Charter newspaper, which within a few months was claiming sales of 10,000 per issue. The movement developed quickly and by 1971 there were seven area committees, including Glasgow, London, Manchester, Wigan, Leicester, Stoke and North Wales. Many of the problems addressed had been visible during the Barbican disputes: the rise in 'lump' labour; chaotic, unstable and inadequate wage systems; and an outdated, declining craft-union structure, where the interests of workers diverged from those of the leaders.⁹⁵ During 1971–2 the Charter spread its network wider and further, not least into Birmingham, which had previously been notorious for its many unorganized sites and for employers opposed to trade unions. By the summer of 1972 Charter activists would be ready to face one of the most powerful groups of employers in British industry, winning a significant pay-rise in the process; in the period after they would pose a continuing challenge to the leadership within the newly-formed Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT).⁹⁶

CONCLUSION

Writing in 1999, McIlroy, Fishman and Campbell noted how in the late twentieth century myths about the role of trade unions in the post-war era were strengthened and lodged deeper in public consciousness. Among these 'foundation legends of Thatcherism', and central indeed to Labour's own adaptation to neo-liberalism, was the depiction of the 1960s 'as a period of hedonism, indiscipline and appeasement' – of trade-union irresponsibility, recklessness and a flawed strategy based on securing working-class influence over the state.⁹⁷ In this paper, we have exposed the long roots of such narratives and shown that already during the 1960s they were influencing government thinking and dominated cultural and media representations of industrial conflict.

The picture that emerges from this study of the Barbican disputes stands as a corrective to such narratives, ubiquitous still in Britain today. The context of the Barbican disputes was complex. Like many industries in the post-war era, construction was in a process of sharp and rapid change. The building labour process was transformed through the use of new technologies and the emergence of new or non-traditional occupations. The widespread use of LOSC and incentive schemes presented a major challenge to employment and working conditions. There was also tension between the design of some major projects and their actual construction, as well as a tendering system that routinely awarded contracts to the lowest bidder, a risky practice when the method of construction was in-situ concrete poured to the pin-point precision demanded by the architecture of the Barbican. Another factor was the crude approach of many large construction firms to industrial relations, which included shutting down sites and blacklisting workers. Finally, the trade unions, spearheaded by the traditional trades

and lagging behind the new developments, were weak and fragmented and unable to provide adequate representation for the multitude of so-called 'non craft' occupations.

Many of these issues were related; together they combined to create the conditions for serious industrial conflict on the Barbican. The Barbican disputes saw the rapid development of the LJSC to combat the major issues affecting building workers: the exponential rise of the lump, the growing chaos of the bonus system, and the underlying casual nature of employment in the industry. The LJSC went on to play a central role in the formation of the Building Worker Charter organization whose aims included the formation of a single construction union, bringing all occupations together, abolition of the lump, and nationalization of the industry. These aims echo those of an earlier rank-and-file movement – the Building Workers Industrial Union, formed in 1911 initially by bricklayers and masons who were affected, in the words of bricklayer Frank Jackson, renowned Communist and industry organizer, by 'skill-displacing technological change'.⁹⁸ The 1960s was similarly a period of rapid change in the labour process, whose increased mechanization and complexity represented a challenge to traditional wage systems and forms of organization. Such changes were nowhere more evident than on the Barbican and it is no coincidence that its construction should so expose contradictions in industrial relations and, at the same time, clarify demands for improving conditions for building workers which resonated throughout London and the country. Those involved in the LJSC and in the Charter movement went on to play key roles in the 1972 national building workers' strike and remained for some years afterwards a force for change in UCATT – an amalgamation of the ASW, ASPD and AUBTW, all of which were losing members by the late 1960s – and in the industry generally. The significance of the Barbican disputes lies in the impetus for change that they accorded and in showing how, through their actions, building workers were able to set this in train.

Charlie McGuire is currently a tutor in politics at North Lindsey College in Scunthorpe and was formerly employed by the University of Westminster as a full-time Research Fellow on the Leverhulme-Trust funded project 'Constructing Post-War Britain: Building Workers Stories 1950–1970'. He is a former UCATT activist who has researched and published widely on Irish and British labour history. Recent publications include *Sean McLoughlin: Ireland's Forgotten Revolutionary* (Merlin Press, 2011) and *Roddy Connolly and the Struggle for Socialism in Ireland* (Cork University Press, 2008).

Linda Clarke is Professor of European Industrial Relations in the Westminster Business School, University of Westminster and co-Director of the Centre for the Study of the Built Environment (ProBE). She has long

experience of comparative research on labour, vocational education, skills, labour history, and wage relations and particular expertise in the construction sector in Europe, including on the board of the European Institute for Construction Labour Research (CLR). Recent publications include: *Knowledge, Skills, Competence in the European Labour Market*, Routledge 2011, and *Bricklaying is More than Flemish Bond: Bricklaying Qualifications in Europe*, CLR, 2010.

Christine Wall is a Senior Research Fellow based in the Department of Architecture of the University of Westminster and founder member of Centre for the Study of the Built Environment (ProBE). She has for many years researched and published on the built environment, in particular the historical, contemporary and social contexts for its production. Recent publications include *Work and Identity: Historical and Cultural Contexts*, Palgrave 2011, and *An Architecture of Parts: Architects, Operatives and the Building Process in Britain 1940–70*, forthcoming Routledge 2013.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

This paper is part of a University of Westminster research project, 'Constructing Post-War Britain; Building Workers' Stories 1950–1970', funded by the Leverhulme Trust, running from August 2010 with Principal Investigator Christine Wall, Co-Applicant Linda Clarke and Research Fellow Charlie McGuire. For more information go to www.buildingworkersstories.com.

The authors would like to thank Vic Heath, Michael Houlihan, John Steeden, Ken Beddoe, Richard Organ and Graham Sharp, and all the other former Barbican workers and members of the London Joint Sites Committee who so generously agreed to take part in the *Constructing Post-War Britain* project.

1 See *Building Workers' Charter: Organ of the Rank and File Building Workers*, published regularly from 1970 in London.

2 See Raymond W. Postgate, *The Builders' History*, National Federation of Building Trade Operatives, London, 1923; and Luke Fawcett, *The Building Workers' Charter*, Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, London, 1944.

3 The building workers' demands in 1972 were for a £10 per week pay rise and a thirty-five-hour working week. After a six-week national strike, involving over 300,000 workers, a settlement was reached. The result was a rise in basic pay from £20 to £26 per week for craft workers and from £17 to £22.50 for non-craft workers: the biggest pay rise that building workers had ever achieved. The working week stayed at forty hours. For more see: Jim Arnison, *The Shrewsbury Three: Strikes, Pickets and Conspiracy*, London, 1974; Ralph Darlington and Dave Lyddon, *Glorious Summer: Class Struggle in Britain, 1972*, London, 2000; and Dave Ayre, Reuben Barker, Jim French, Jimmy Graham and Dave Harker, *Flying Pickets: the 1972 Builders' Strike and the Shrewsbury Trials*, Cambridge, 2008.

4 See John R. Colclough, *The Construction Industry of Great Britain*, London, 1965, p. 130.

5 Geoff Briscoe, Andrew Dainty and Sarah Millett, 'The Impact of the Tax System on Self-Employment in the British Construction Industry', *International Journal of Manpower* 21: 8, 2000, p. 597; Andrew Thorpe, 'The Labour Party and the Trade Unions', in *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: vol. 2, the High Tide of Trade Unionism, 1964–1979*, ed. John McLroy, Nina Fishman and Alan Campbell, Aldershot, 1999, p. 137.

6 HMSO, *In Place of Strife: a Policy for Industrial Relations*, Cmnd. 3888, 1969, p. 39

7 Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, London, 1971, p. 369.

8 Building trade unionists provide one such example. For more, see London District Communist Party, *Building Workers: What Communists Have to Say about the Industry*, London, 1968, p. 2.

9 Elain Harwood, *Chamberlin, Powell and Bon*, London: 2011, p. 100.

10 Harwood, *Chamberlin, Powell and Bon*, p. 114.

11 A five-year plateau then a significant drop followed this. See Michael Ball, *Rebuilding Construction: Economic Change in the British Construction Industry*, London, 1988, pp. 98–9.

12 *Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, 1965–1968* ('Donovan Report'), Cmnd 3623, HMSO, London, 1968, p. 9.

13 *Report of the Committee of Inquiry Under Professor E. H. Phelps-Brown into Certain Matters Concerning Labour in Building and Civil Engineering* ('Phelps-Brown Report'), Cmnd 3714–I, HMSO, London, 1968, pp. 24–5.

14 For more on these changes to the occupational structure of the industry, see Phelps-Brown Report, pp. 33–40.

15 National Board of Prices and Income (NPBI), *Pay and Conditions in the Building Industry*, Cmnd 3837, Report No. 92, HMSO, London, 1968, p. 7.

16 Terry Austrin, 'Industrial Relations in the Construction Industry: Some Sociological Considerations on Wage Contracts and Trade Unionism, 1919–1973', PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 1978, p. 177. See also Linda Clarke, 'The Changing Structure and Significance of Apprenticeship with Special Reference to Construction', in *Apprenticeship: Towards a New Paradigm of Learning*, ed. Patrick Ainly and Helen Rainbird, 1999.

17 A similar body, the Civil Engineering Conciliation Board, made up of employers and union representatives, negotiated pay and conditions of workers in civil engineering. The blurring of the divides between the two sectors of the construction industry often caused friction between different unions over the question of what agreement should be used.

18 William S. Hilton, *Industrial Relations in Construction*, Oxford, 1968, p. 72. Hilton obtained these figures from the Ministry of Public Building and Works.

19 W. S. Hilton, *Foes to Tyranny: a History of the AUBTW*, AUBTW, 1964, p. 273.

20 Colclough, *Construction Industry*, p. 130; and *Department of Employment Gazette*, April 1976.

21 NBPI, *Pay and Conditions in the Building Industry*, 1968, p. 13.

22 For more on building employers' views on the disciplinary functions of trade unions, see *Construction News*, 9 Feb. 1967.

23 For more on the strike at the Shell-Mex site, see *The Times*, 8 Nov. and 21 Nov. 1958, and the *Daily Worker*, 9 Oct., 15 Oct. and 31 Oct. 1958. Two workers were also imprisoned for their part in this dispute, one of them Brian Behan, brother of Irish writer and political activist Brendan.

24 NBPI, *Pay and Conditions in the Building Industry*, 1968, p. 28.

25 See L. J. Handy, *Wage Determination in the Construction Industry: an Analysis of post-war trends*, Department of Applied Economics, University of Cambridge, 1971.

26 Janet Druker points out that the building industry had moved from second place in the wage rates by industry in 1938 to twelfth place in 1963: Jan Druker, 'One Big Union: Structural Change in Building Trade Unionism', PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1980, p. 419.

27 Interview with Vic Heath, former scaffolder and shop-steward on Turriff Barbican Site, 31 Jan. 2011.

28 For the National Federation of Building Trade Employers on LOSC, see two-page feature in *Construction News*, 20 July 1967.

29 Austrin, 'Industrial Relations in the Construction Industry', p. 177; Phelps Brown Report, Research Appendices, p. 3.

30 Building Research Station, *Building Operatives' Work...including a Review of Training: a first report of the Operative Skills Enquiry*, Ronald E. Jeanes, HMSO, London, vol. 2, Appendices, 1966.

31 Austrin, 'Industrial Relations in the Construction Industry', pp. 112–3.

32 For more on the 'Document', see Postgate, *Builders' History*, p. 88.

33 *Daily Worker*, 2 Oct. 1965. The four sites were: Laing's Paternoster site; Sunley's, Horseferry Road; Higgs and Hill, South Bank; and Wimpey's, Euston.

34 *Daily Worker*, 29 Sept. 1965.

35 *Construction News*, 14 Oct. 1966.

36 Interview with Vic Heath, 31 Jan. 2011.

37 *Daily Worker*, 4 Oct. 1965.

- 38 *Daily Worker*, 4 Oct. 1965.
- 39 *Daily Worker*, 12 Oct. 1965.
- 40 This support helped to raise more than £1,000 in just over two weeks: Turriff Barbican Dispute, final balance sheet. We are obliged to Vic Heath for a copy of this.
- 41 London District Committee Communist Party, *Building Workers – What Communists have to say about the Industry*, p. 5.
- 42 *Daily Worker*, 25 Sept. 1965.
- 43 One of those permanently sacked was Dessie Warren. Warren would later be one of the Shrewsbury Pickets, convicted and jailed under the 1875 Conspiracy Act, after the 1972 building workers' strike.
- 44 The NFBTO Federation Stewards were only recognized by the employers from 1964 on.
- 45 *Morning Star*, 20 Oct. 1967.
- 46 Interview with Michael Houlihan, 22 March 2011.
- 47 Interview with Michael Houlihan, 22 March 2011.
- 48 *Morning Star*, 6 June 1967.
- 49 *Morning Star*, 17 Jan. 1967.
- 50 Allen, an ex-miner and revolutionary socialist, had also worked as a labourer in the building industry. *Construction News*, an informative journal but one that routinely started from the employer's standpoint, described his play as 'pathetically inaccurate and nonsensical', 9 Feb. 1967.
- 51 The ASW, where power was more centralized, refused from the beginning to support the action.
- 52 *The Times*, 31 Oct. 1966.
- 53 See, for example, *Evening News*, 1 March 1967.
- 54 *Daily Mail*, 22 Feb. 1967.
- 55 *Evening News*, 1 March 1967.
- 56 List of names of London Joint Sites Committee members, circa 1967. We are obliged to Michael Houlihan for this.
- 57 Interview with Vic Heath, 31 Jan. 2011.
- 58 Interview with Graham Sharp (ex-LJSC chairman), 10 Oct. 2011.
- 59 As note 53.
- 60 Interview with Michael Houlihan, 22 March 2011.
- 61 As note 55.
- 62 *Evening News*, 1 March 1967.
- 63 This is a point that was made in several interviews with ex-Barbican building workers, among them Vic Heath, Michael Houlihan, Graham Sharp and Richard Organ.
- 64 See Sanjay Trivedi, *Scaffolding: In from the Cold*, MSc Research Project, University of Birmingham, Department of Transportation and Highway Engineering, 1982.
- 65 Building Research Station, *Building Operatives' Work...*, Ronald E. Jeanes, 1966, pp. 89–90.
- 66 It should also be noted that the scaffolders on the Barbican were members of the AUBTW.
- 67 Michael Houlihan, 'Barbican Shows the Way', in *Rank and File* 9, April 1967.
- 68 Record of Proceedings of a National Disputes Commission, 7 March 1967, National Archives, LAB 10/2960.
- 69 Record of Proceedings of a National Disputes Commission, 7 March 1967.
- 70 Record of Proceedings of a National Disputes Commission, 7 March 1967.
- 71 *Construction News*, 16 March 1967.
- 72 *Morning Star*, 18 April 1967.
- 73 *Morning Star*, 15 May 1967.
- 74 *Morning Star*, 30 May 1967.
- 75 Sunley director George Avery admitted much of this at the Cameron Inquiry: *Report of a Court of Inquiry into Trade Disputes on the Barbican and Horseferry Road Construction Sites in London* ('Cameron Report'), Cmnd 3396, HMSO, London, 1967. For more on this see *Financial Times*, 8 June 1967. Hugh Cassidy later wrote a series of detailed articles on the Horseferry Road lock-out: see *Building Workers' Charter* 1: 3, 4, 5, 1970.
- 76 *Financial Times*, 6 June 1967.
- 77 *Construction News*, 27 April 1967.
- 78 The Barbican redevelopment was eventually completed in 1982 at an estimated cost of almost £200 million. The Arts Centre alone cost £159 million.

79 *Construction News*, 3 Aug. 1967.

80 *Construction News*, 3 Aug. 1967.

81 *The Times*, 3 July 1968.

82 Cameron Report, p. 48. In relation to Horseferry Road Cameron, faced with strong evidence that Sunley and Co had provoked the dispute, recommended that the site be reopened and all workers, including the works committee, be re-employed. But he also said that a new works committee should be selected, and that none of the existing members should be eligible for membership.

83 Cameron Report, p. 58.

84 Cameron Report, p. 57.

85 See for example *Evening News*, 26 Oct. 1967.

86 *Construction News*, 12 Oct. 1967.

87 *Morning Star*, 17 Oct. 1967; Advance News Bureau and the Irish Internationalists, *Barbican: Police Go Berserk*, October 1967.

88 Letter by Michael Houlihan to AUBTW executive (n.d., 1967?), Michael Houlihan papers.

89 Interview with Michael Houlihan, 22 March 2011.

90 *Morning Star*, 25 Jan. 1968, 12 Jan. 1968.

91 Interview with Michael Houlihan, 22 March 2011. Houlihan also said that he knew of other Barbican workers who were blacklisted, including some who had not played a prominent role in the disputes. A similar point was made by plumber Richard Organ, also blacklisted after working on the Barbican, and carpenter Jim McDonald: interviews with Richard Organ, 15 Aug. 2011 and Jim McDonald, 14 March 2012.

92 Interview with Ken Beddoe, 16 Aug. 2011.

93 This included a plumbers' strike over bonus payments, led by members of the LJSC. Interview with Richard Organ, 15 Aug. 2011.

94 *Building Workers' Charter* 1: 2, 1970.

95 *Building Workers' Charter* 1: 1, 1970.

96 For an analysis of divisions in UCATT (formed in 1971) during the mid 1970s, and the strategies and influence of the Charter activists and the left in general, see Joe England, 'How UCATT Revised its Rules: an Anatomy of Organizational Change', *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 17: 1, 1979, pp. 8–16.

97 John McIlroy, Nina Fishman and Alan Campbell, 'Introduction: Approaching Post-War Trade Unionism', *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics*, ed. McIlroy, Fishman and Campbell, p. 1.

98 See Peter Latham, *Rank and File Movements in Building 1910-1920*, Our History Pamphlet 69, Communist Party of Great Britain, no date.