

From an 'Experiment in Industrial Democracy' to
'Driving the Difference': The John Lewis Partnership
Co-ownership Model 1964-2014

Samantha Ann Woodward

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Philosophical, Historical and Interdisciplinary
Studies

University of Essex

April 2024

Abstract

John Lewis department stores and Waitrose supermarkets are household names in Britain, known not only for their retail quality and customer service but for their unique business model. The co-ownership model of the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) has long been recognised as the reason for the success of the business; as co-owners, Partners were empowered through the democratic institutions of the Partnership to have a say in the running of the business. The Partnership's democracy, modelled on the government system of the United Kingdom, positioned Partners not only as co-owners but members akin to citizens of a nation state. The thesis argues that the positioning of Partners as both co-owners and citizens created tensions within the expanding Partnership.

The Partnership model was contested throughout the twentieth century as the retail sector faced challenges and changes in consumption, culture, and politics. The business faced accusations of being old-fashioned and slow to change despite its lauded reputation as a reliable and trusted retailer. Challenges often put the business under strain, emphasizing tensions and exposing the underlying managerial control which raised questions about the extent of the sharing of power in the business. This thesis uses oral history interviews with retired Partners, business records and government papers to examine themes that highlighted tensions within the Partnership model and to explore the experience of individual Partners within the business. By examining leisure, trade unionism, disability and the impact of modernisation, this thesis demonstrates the strengths and limitations of the JLP model in the democratization of power and ownership.

Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements	v
List of abbreviations	viii
1 Introduction	1
1.1 An Experiment in Industrial Democracy	3
1.2 Citizenship in Post-war Britain	7
1.3 Work and the Retail Sector	13
1.4 Studies of the John Lewis Partnership.....	20
1.5 The John Lewis Partnership and its use of history.....	29
1.6 Methodology	33
1.7 Thesis structure.....	43
2 The Democratic Structures of the John Lewis Partnership.....	47
2.1 Introduction	47
2.2 The Founder and the founding principles of Partnership.....	49
2.3 Boundaries of Partnership.....	62
2.4 The Principal Authorities	67
2.5 Democracy in branch	75
2.6 Journalism.....	81
2.7 Conclusion	88
3 The Partnership Difference.....	89
3.1 Introduction	89
3.2 Inequality, welfare, and work.....	90
3.3 Partnership welfare and amenities.....	101
3.4 Subsidised leisure	111
3.5 Conclusion	129
4 Membership and Loyalty	131
4.1 Introduction	131
4.2 The Partnership and trade unionism	132
4.3 Donovan, In Place of Strife & an Experiment in Industrial Democracy.....	136
4.4 Worker participation and industrial action	152
4.5 Systems of industrial relations in the JLP.....	162

4.6 Conclusion	170
5 Employment & Disability in the John Lewis Partnership.....	172
5.1 Introduction	172
5.2 Disability Rights and the Archive.....	174
5.3 Disability and Retail Work in the Twentieth Century.....	183
5.4 The Quota Scheme and its Demise	205
5.5 Introducing ‘Access to Work’	217
5.6 Conclusion	222
6 The Partnership under Strain	224
6.1 Introduction	224
6.2 Co-ownership and Participation in the JLP	226
6.3 The Sunday Trading Debate	233
6.4 “Let’s sell now, make a few pounds”: The Demutualisation Debate in the JLP ..	242
6.5 Modernisation and the impact on membership	252
6.6 Conclusion	267
7 Conclusion	270
Appendices	283
Appendix 1	283
Appendix 2	284
Appendix 3	285
Bibliography	286

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my supervisors Dr Alix Green, Dr Matthew Grant and Judy Faraday for their ongoing support throughout this project in particular for the faith placed in me to go from undergraduate to PGR. I would also like to thank Professor Sean Kelley and Dr Tom Freeman for their valuable feedback as chairs of supervisory panels and the Consortium for the Humanities & the Arts South-East England for their funding and training opportunities throughout the project.

The project would not have been possible without the retired Partners who volunteered for interviews, and I am grateful for the time that they gave to this project. I would also like to thank the team at the John Lewis Partnership Archive, Judy Faraday, Gavin Henderson, Imogen Livesley, Phaedra Casey, Hannah Raeburn, Emma Summerell and Joy Tracy for their help throughout the project with every query and visit to the heritage centre.

In addition, I would like to thank the archivists at Sainsbury Archive, the Co-operative Heritage Trust, Special Collections in the Albert Sloman Library, Modern Records Centre, Marks & Spencer Archive, and the National Archives.

Thank you to Terry Smyth, Daisy Payling, Hannah Froom and Miles Clayton for their insightful discussions on methodology that helped to shape the early stages of this project. Oral history has been an excellent conversation starter, and I am grateful that talking about interviews put me in contact with Anne Steinhoff. Having the opportunity to reflect with over interviews during lockdown was incredibly helpful in thinking about

remote interviewing techniques and I am glad we are able to do more of this in-person now.

The History Department at the University of Essex has been my home since 2016 and I am thankful for all the coffee mornings, research seminars and conversations in the history office over the last eight years. Thank you to Hannah Onslow, Lisa Willis, Belinda Waterman, Matthew Davies, Abby Connell, Emma McClelland and Karen Shields. The PhD community has also been a constant support system from conversations in the PhD room to History Indoors over lockdown. Thank you to Ben Fuggle, Sarah Marshall, Sabina Garahan, Robert Foulkes, Cody Henry, Julie Miller, James Jefferies, Hannah Froom, Louise Rodwell, Percy Lomax, Helen Kemp, Mike O’Keeffe, Josh de Cruz, Claudia Mohor Valentino and Julius Scheider. I would like to specially shout out to Liam Redfern, Michael Sewell, Ryan Clarke, and Lily Davis who have provided additional support through gaming sessions and voice notes.

While at times it has felt like my world has revolved around this PhD, I am extremely grateful for Heidi Crowell and Jamie Hauxwell who have reminded me that there is a life outside of university and who I owe many drinks to putting up with me for the last few years.

This PhD and the last year, in particular, has not been without its difficulties, and I am extremely grateful to my family for their love and support. To my Mum, Dad, Lesley, Grandad, Grandma and Sarah and Adrian Smith, thank you. Thank you especially to Lewis Smith who has been a constant grounding presence throughout the PhD, offering unwavering support and belief throughout every wobble.

Finally, I would like to thank the Friday Writing Group that includes Rebecca Warren, Alix Green, and Lewis Smith. Friday mornings have never felt so productive. Thank you for all your support, mentorship, and friendship.

List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Name
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
DROs	Disablement Resettlement Officers
DIG	Disability Income Group
JLP	John Lewis Partnership
KSSC	Keep Sunday Special Campaign
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
M&S	Marks and Spencer
OPEN	Outlets Providing Everyday Needs
RSAR	Retailers for Shops Act Reform
SPS	Selfridge Provincial Stores
SHRC	Shopping Hours Reform Council
SOS	Sort Out Sunday
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
USDAW	Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers
UPIAS	Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation
UN	United Nations

1 Introduction

The John Lewis Partnership (JLP), comprised chiefly of the John Lewis Department Stores and Waitrose Supermarkets, is a well-known British brand with a rich heritage in retail and design and its Partnership business model. In 2010, the ‘John Lewis Model’ resurged as an attractive alternative business model in politics following the election of the coalition government, with the potential to be applied to public and private sector alike.¹ These debates, involving key political figures such as Nick Clegg, David Cameron, and Theresa May, demonstrated the continued relevance and interest in the Partnership’s employee-owned structure, worker participation and democracy.²

The JLP was founded in 1929 by, John Spedan Lewis. At its founding, the Partnership consisted of only two department stores in London: John Lewis, Oxford Street and Peter Jones, Sloane Square.³ In the interwar period, the JLP began to expand, acquiring the first branches outside of London in 1933 and then, in 1937, acquiring Waitrose, expanding the Partnership into the grocery business.⁴ The business soon expanded to include “fifty-six units scattered between Edinburgh and Southampton” by 1968.⁵ By 2015 the JLP had had grown to include 322 Waitrose branches and 41 John

¹ Patrick Kingsley, ‘What Exactly Is the “John Lewis Model”?’ , *The Guardian*, 22 February 2012 <<https://www.theguardian.com/education/shortcuts/2012/feb/22/what-is-john-lewis-model>> [accessed 6 February 2024].

² Patrick Wintour, ‘Nick Clegg Pushes “John Lewis”-Style Economy’ , *The Guardian*, 15 January 2012 <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/jan/15/nick-clegg-john-lewis-economy>,> [accessed 6 February 2024]; Kingsley; Nils Pratley, ‘Theresa May’s Plan to Put Workers in Boardrooms Is Extraordinary’ , *The Guardian*, 11 July 2016, 20 April 2020 <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/nils-pratley-on-finance/2016/jul/11/theresa-may-plan-workers-boardroom-reform-extraordinary-tories>>.

³ Peter Cox, *Spedan’s Partnership* (Labatie Books, 2010), pp. 78–79.

⁴ Cox, p. 84; Cox, p. 100.

⁵ Sir Bernard Miller, ‘Foreword’ in Allan D Flanders, Ruth Pomeranz, and Joan Woodward, *Experiment in Industrial Democracy: A Study of the John Lewis Partnership* (Faber & Faber, 1968), p. 15.

Lewis stores across the United Kingdom.⁶ Whilst the Partnership has expanded since its formation, many of the original elements of the democratic structure, institutions and ideology remained intact throughout the twentieth century.

This thesis examines the continuing role of the Partnership model and the experience of Partners within it between 1964 and 2014. Throughout this period, the Partnership underwent a series of internal changes driven by changes in leadership, burgeoning competitors, government policy and the challenges the modernisation. Argued to be at the “forefront of new IT technology”, the first computer was installed in the Partnership in 1963 in the new Stevenage warehouse, designed for stock control.⁷ However, it was argued that the Partnership failed to modernise in other ways until 2000 with “restricted opening hours, stores [that] closed early on Saturdays and remained closed until Tuesday each week, [...] very limited advertising, a refusal to take credit cards, a lack of business planning, and legacy systems out of step with those of competitors”.⁸ This made the JLP appear old-fashioned and unadventurous despite being a reliable and trusted company.⁹ Following 2000, a series of schemes were put in place to aid modernisation within the business including a programme called “Driving the Difference”, which created a new organisational structure within the JLP, breaking down the role previously held by registrars that supported Partners and democratic practice.¹⁰

⁶ Graeme Salaman and John Storey, *A Better Way of Doing Business?: Lessons from the John Lewis Partnership* (Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 22.

⁷ Jonathan Blatchford, ‘John Lewis & Partners Memory Store’, *From Temporary Shop to London Landmark*, 2018 <https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/branch_finder/branches_oxford_street/post-war_years-4-2/from_temporary_shop_to_london_landmark> [accessed 26 May 2020].

⁸ Salaman and Storey, p. 27.

⁹ Salaman and Storey, p. 27.

¹⁰ Salaman and Storey, pp. 46–47.

This thesis argues that Partners within the JLP performed a dual role: as citizens in a democracy and as co-owners in an expanding business. The positioning of Partners as citizens and co-owners created tensions in the Partnership. These tensions were emphasized in periods of strain which exposed underlying managerial control and raised questions over the pervasiveness of power sharing within the business. Through the examination of leisure, trade unionism, disability, and duty, this thesis demonstrates both the strengths and limitations of the Partnership model in the democratization of power and ownership.

1.1 An Experiment in Industrial Democracy

In 1964, a study of the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) was commissioned as the Partnership approached its fiftieth anniversary.¹¹ Published in 1968 as *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, the work was described as “the most important and influential study” of the JLP.¹² Allan Flanders, Ruth Pomeranz and Joan Woodward investigated broadly “what the Partnership means to Partners” and examined the Partners’ interest in the democratic structures and the effect on attitudes to work and the organisation.¹³ As part of the research into this project extensive oral and written interviews were conducted with four-hundred and sixty-eight Partners in non-management roles sampled from the eight largest department stores within the Partnership. Flanders et al. also conducted interviews with “thirteen senior members of central management and the Heads of six

¹¹ Bernard Miller, ‘Foreword’ in Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 15.

¹² Keith Bradley and Simon Taylor, *Business Performance in the Retail Sector: The Experience of the John Lewis Partnership* (Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 10.

¹³ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 24.

branches”.¹⁴ The study concluded that the ideology of the Partnership was powerful, influencing not only the behaviour of workers, and especially those in management roles, but also the organisation itself in its exemplary role of solving “many of the contemporary ills of the industrial society”.¹⁵

The Partnership’s ideology had three key aspirations: the sharing of power, the sharing of gain and the sharing of knowledge.¹⁶ These were ruled by an overarching objective of business success and as such, the aspirations could not be allowed to impair “the strength and efficiency of management”.¹⁷ This led to criticisms of the paternalistic nature of the democratic system installed by the founder, John Spedan Lewis, without consultation of his employees, that assumed management “knows what is in the best interests of all the Partners”.¹⁸ The institutions of the Partnership were structurally designed to be used to hold management accountable for their decisions by non-management Partners as a form of power sharing. These institutions were: the Central Council, Branch Councils, Committees for Communication and *The Gazette*. The Central Council, as described by Spedan Lewis in *Fairer Shares* in 1954, comprised of one-hundred and thirteen members, of which two thirds were elected.¹⁹ For the representational purposes, the Partnership was divided into constituencies for annual elections which took place via anonymous ballot.²⁰ From the Central Council, five members were then nominated to be representatives on the Central Board along with the

¹⁴ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 25.

¹⁵ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 180.

¹⁶ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares* (Staples Press Limited, 1954), p. 25.

¹⁷ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 23.

¹⁸ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 193.

¹⁹ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 92.

²⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 92. .

Chairman, Deputy Chairman and five others nominated by the Chairman.²¹ Spedan Lewis described “the Central Board as the ‘head’ and the Central Council as the ‘heart’ of the organization” and together these institutions were referred to as the Principal Management of the Partnership.²² Branch Councils became necessary as the Partnership grew and had the ability to influence policy through the sponsoring of resolutions in the Central Council.²³

However, Flanders et. al argued that the councils were problematic as they were “more representative of management than of the rank and file”.²⁴ Both the Central and Branch Councils consisted of Partners in both management and non-management roles. The exception was the Committees for Communication which were composed of only ‘rank and file’ members and allowed for direct communication between non-management Partners and the office of the Chairman. However, these committees did not wield executive power or have their own funds.²⁵ Spedan Lewis argued that the democratic institutions all had “complete freedom of discussion” and as of 1954, “no request for information ever has been refused”.²⁶ The Central Council also had the ultimate power of being able to request the Chairman’s resignation and if refused, could “declare it vacant and their trustees can appoint anyone who seems fit”; this power has not yet been exercised yet in the history of the Partnership.²⁷

²¹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 36.

²² Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 144–45.

²³ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 72.

²⁴ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 187.

²⁵ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 51.

²⁶ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 58.

²⁷ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 96.

The final institution for power sharing was also key to the sharing of knowledge. This came in the form of an in-house magazine called *The Gazette* that was published weekly. First published in 1918, *The Gazette* was initially circulated in Peter Jones and then the wider Partnership.²⁸ Each issue contained articles about activities in the JLP, related to both business and leisure. As the JLP grew, a local version was published at branch or constituency level called the *Chronicle*.²⁹ Both publications had letter columns that allowed correspondents to write to anonymously. The columns provided a means for Partners to hold management accountable for their decision-making and policy implementation.³⁰

The final aspiration of the Partnership, the sharing of gain, was highlighted by Flanders et. al highlighted as the least problematic, stating that while the profit-sharing system is radical, “any outside shareholding interest in or control over the behaviour of the organization has been eliminated, and all distributed profits, after payment of the fixed interest on capital, are fully shared by those who sustain it by their work”.³¹ The relative success of these institutions and the aspirations underpinning them, depended on Partners’ belief in the ideology of the Partnership, particularly by those who held management positions who were responsible for decision-making and would be held accountable by the other members of the Partnership.³² Spedan Lewis designed the JLP

²⁸ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 42.

²⁹ *John Spedan Lewis 1885-1963*, ed. by Hugh MacPherson (John Lewis, 1985), p. 180.

³⁰ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 43. .

³¹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 185.

³² Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 188.

on his principles of how a business should be run: dealing fairly with customers and increasing the happiness of those employed in it.³³

The ideology installed by the founder created a strong sense of responsibility among management and encouraged the freedom of criticism among all Partners.³⁴ Partners were made to feel, as co-owners, that it was their responsibility to work towards the success of the business, enforcing the authority of management decisions so long as they respected the Partnership's ideology. However, the effectiveness of the Partnership's ideology was dependent on employees *feeling* and *behaving* like Partners within the democratic structures and intuitions of the JLP. As such, this project contributes to literatures on citizenship and work which were central to the understanding of the Partnership and shaped the lives of Partners.

1.2 Citizenship in Post-war Britain

In designing the John Lewis Partnership, Spedan Lewis defined the JLP as a “state within a state”, where Partners were “bound by the laws of the land” as well as committed to the Partnership's goal of “advancing the happiness of its members”.³⁵ As citizens of a nation are bound in a reciprocal relationship with the state, Partners were bound to the Partnership through commitment to common goals, prioritising the needs of the Partnership as a whole, and enjoyment of the rewards their work reaped, all as set out in

³³ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 23–24.

³⁴ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 183.

³⁵ Alix R Green, “‘Secret Lists and Sanctions’: The Blacklisting of the John Lewis Partnership and the Politics of Pay in 1970s Britain”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 30.2 (2019), pp. 205–30 (p. 227).

the constitution of the Partnership. In postwar Britain, the relationship between the citizen and state was reshaped as debates framed the terms and conditions of citizenship.

Jose Harris examined political ideas of contract and citizenship that resulted in the welfare state of postwar Britain. Harris proposed that social welfare schemes offered historians' insight into "the mind, morality and power structure of a given period".³⁶ Harris highlighted the "complex and ambiguous vision of citizenship" which suggested that "citizenship was earned or acquired by means of some kind of moral or behavioural entitlement, rather than merely as a passive birthright open to all comers".³⁷ Harris argued that this vision of citizenship survived into the twentieth century and was clearly visible in the understanding of citizenship rights requiring a societal foothold such as "payment of rates and taxes, headship of a household, tenured employment, and all other forms of economic independence".³⁸

Citizenship was argued to be valuable in terms of raising living standards. Zweiniger-Bargielowska argued that to assess "standard of living", "it is necessary to go beyond income and expenditure" and included "political rights or citizenship" as a factor used in the evaluation of standard of living is alongside "health, education, environment, economic and cultural opportunities, welfare provision and social support networks".³⁹ The understanding of citizenship, established by social welfare schemes, and Zweiniger-Bargielowska's inclusion of citizenship as a basic standard of living, portrayed the

³⁶ Jose Harris, "Contract" and "Citizenship", in *The Ideas That Shaped Post-War Britain*, ed. by David Marquand and Anthony Seldon (Fontana Press, 1996), pp. 137–38.

³⁷ Harris, "Contract" and "Citizenship", p. 133.

³⁸ Harris, "Contract" and "Citizenship", p. 134.

³⁹ Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Living Standards and Consumption', in *A Companion to Contemporary Britain*, ed. by Paul Addison and Harriet Jones (Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), p. 227.

fundamental importance of 'citizenship' to the individual's conceptions of living standard in a postwar society.

The establishment of citizenship as a status that could be earned and required the fulfilment certain commitments suggested that citizenship was not fixed and that if a citizen failed in their role, their status could be at risk. Grant defined citizenship as "both a status and a practice": status could be given at birth, awarded or achieved and was linked to practice of citizenship which enabled citizens to "achieve, enhance, lose, or diminish their status".⁴⁰ The framing of citizenship did not remain static in the postwar period but has been used to frame questions related to "interactions between individuals and the state, and between individuals within society".⁴¹ As such citizenship has been used in histories that examine the social, legal and political relationship of the population with the state, the construction of national communities and ideals of belonging, and how concepts of 'good' citizenship have been used to improve or enhance individuals or groups. In examining the JLP, these previous approaches to citizenship are drawn on to understand the relationship between Partners and the JLP, similar to that of citizens and a nation state.

The 'nation' was described by Anderson as a "solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" suggesting that 'an American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000,000-odd fellow-Americans [...] but he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity'.⁴² This

⁴⁰ Matthew Grant, 'Historicizing Citizenship in Post-War Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 59.4 (2016), pp. 1187–1206 (p. 1190).

⁴¹ Grant, p. 1188.

⁴² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition. (Verso, 2006).

description can similarly be applied, on a condensed scale, to workforces within large businesses, where all the employees are unlikely to ever meet but are all assumed to be working towards a common goal, the success of the business and therefore, themselves through that employment. Employees act in a similar way to that of citizens in a nation as part of an “imagined political community”, built through shared experience and comradery, regardless of individual instances of inequality and exploitation.⁴³ As argued by Heller and Rowlinson the application of Anderson’s concept of imagined communities to the corporate setting has greater scope in the field of organisation studies.⁴⁴ They demonstrated how corporate communities were imagined through corporate publications, using the magazines of the BBC, HSBC, Cadbury and Royal Mail while also drawing on examples such as the JLP to show the value of applying historical theory to discourses on internal communications and corporate culture.⁴⁵

Workplaces have been previously identified in human relations literature as microcosms of states, allowing for understanding of citizenship at an industrial level.⁴⁶ The morale of the community or workforce was seen as vital in postwar production efforts resulting in a surge of human relations management to support reconstruction efforts. Throughout the war, morale was understood in terms of “mobilization to action, and for the first time, the British state orchestrated a massive effort to observe, manage, and maintain morale on both civilian and military fronts”.⁴⁷ This mobilization relied on a sense

⁴³ Benedict Anderson.

⁴⁴ Michael Heller and Michael Rowlinson, ‘The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets’, *Business History*, 62.6 (2020), pp. 1002–26.

⁴⁵ Michael Heller and Michael Rowlinson, ‘Imagined Corporate Communities: Historical Sources and Discourses’, *British Journal of Management*, 31 (2020), pp. 752–68.

⁴⁶ Daniel Ussishkin, ‘Morale and the Postwar Politics of Consensus’, *Journal of British Studies*, 52.3 (2013), pp. 722–43 (p. 741).

⁴⁷ Ussishkin, p. 730.

of duty, citizenship and collective effort. Following the total mobilization effort of the Second World War morale was difficult to maintain and Ussishkin argued that efforts to manage morale were short lived, however debates continued over the best way to engage workers through participation and consultation.⁴⁸

Through the systems of consultation and collective bargaining, T. H. Marshall argued that trade unionism “created a secondary system of industrial citizenship parallel with and supplementary to the system of political citizenship”.⁴⁹ Industrial citizenship was identified as having the potential to be more effective than political citizenship as the communities involved were smaller and often localised, allowing for a present sense of obligation and duty to the community. T.H. Marshall was critiqued for not recognizing that “in practice the basis for claiming such rights and the nature of entitlements were not universal, but rather profoundly different for men and women”, suggesting that there were limitations to citizenship and participation.⁵⁰ This was emphasised in Langhamer’s work on the role of emotion in gendering the workplace where women in the 1950s were persuaded into work, arguing the emotional benefit of work whilst also assigning women to roles that had inherent emotional dimensions.⁵¹

The role of emotion in citizenship became more prominent in the postwar period. Langhamer approached “citizenship as an emotional practice” when examining Mass

⁴⁸ Ussishkin, p. 742.

⁴⁹ T.H. Marshall and Tom Bottomore, ‘Citizenship and Social Class’, in *Citizenship and Social Class* (Pluto Press, 1992), pp. 1–52 (p. 26), doi:10.2307/j.ctt18mvns1.5.

⁵⁰ Jane Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945: Women, Family, Work and the State in the Post-War Years* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), p. 114.

⁵¹ Claire Langhamer, ‘Feelings, Women and Work in the Long 1950s’, *Women’s History Review*, 26.1 (2017), pp. 77–92 (pp. 77–78).

Observation material in the immediate postwar period.⁵² Using Grant's definition of 'citizenship' as both status and practice, Langhamer argued that emotion, as much as experience, had "distinctive cultural and political power" informing the political identity of 'ordinary' people and being recognised as a powerful tool in public life.⁵³ This was exemplified in the workplace as work, described by Arnold-Forster and Moulds, was and "is an almost ubiquitous human experience", intersecting both the private and the public through the management, portrayal and experiences of emotions.⁵⁴ Workplaces became increasingly interested in the emotional welfare and well-being of their employees, as demonstrated by the provision in the rules of the JLP that stated the "the Partnership's ultimate aim shall be the happiness of all its members".⁵⁵

These questions of citizenship and duty were pertinent throughout and following the Second World War as citizens' relationships to the state were reformed through wider provisions of services and welfare. Partners acted as citizens within the Partnership, fulfilling their duties and receiving welfare and benefits in turn, similar to the framing of citizenship at a national level. However, not all of those employed within the Partnership were granted the title of 'Partner', for some the title was conditional; for example, when Waitrose was purchased by the JLP in 1937, all the employees were made Partners with full entitlements immediately.⁵⁶ Comparatively, when Selfridges' Suburban and Provincial

⁵² Claire Langhamer, "Astray in a Dark Forest"? The Emotional Politics of Reconstruction Britain', in *Total War: An Emotional History*, ed. by Lucy Noakes, Claire Langhamer, and Claudia Siebrecht (British Academy, 2020), pp. 137–56 (pp. 139–40).

⁵³ Langhamer, "Astray in a Dark Forest"? The Emotional Politics of Reconstruction Britain', pp. 154–55.

⁵⁴ Agnes Arnold-Forster and Alison Moulds, 'Introduction', in *Feelings and Work in Modern History*, ed. by Agnes Arnold-Forster and Alison Moulds (Bloomsbury, 2022), pp. 1–18 (p. 3).

⁵⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965* (John Lewis and Company Limited, 1965), p. 31.

⁵⁶ Cox, p. 103.

Stores were acquired in 1940, staff had to prove the stores profitability before becoming instated as Partners.⁵⁷ The difference in the language used to describe different statuses of staff employed by the JLP highlighted questions of citizenship and status broadly within the Partnership.

1.3 Work and the Retail Sector

The business of the Partnership is historically rooted in department store trading. Department stores have been of particular interest to historians as a mark of the rising middle-classes from the nineteenth century and as culturally important sites for changes to consumption, gender, leisure, and work.⁵⁸ By examining the West End of London, Rappaport demonstrated the role of different social groups in building “London’s wealthiest neighbourhood”.⁵⁹ Rappaport also explored how developments in retailers of London’s West End throughout the late Victorian and Edwardian period promoted consumer culture through scaling up stores, product ranges and advertising. While primarily a social and cultural history focused on exploring the changing role of women within consumer culture, *Shopping for Pleasure* provides a comprehensive overview of department stores and their changing culture in the West End of London, where the John Lewis flagship, Oxford Street was based.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Cox, p. 103.

⁵⁸ Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London’s West End* (Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 4–8.

⁵⁹ Rappaport, p. 7.

⁶⁰ Rappaport, p. 13.

The role of department stores as employers was examined by Lancaster who stated that “the labour history of the department store in Britain is virgin territory” and highlighted department stores as major employers by the late nineteenth century with stores such as Harrods, employing over a thousand workers.⁶¹ Lancaster linked the individual histories of several department stores, including John Lewis, Harrods and Selfridges, to develop a general history of department stores that began to explore different patterns of ownership, productivity and management. One such development was of the comparison between the “corporate virtue” offered by the Partnership and “civic virtue” by other stores; “images of happy workers enjoying a genuine five-day week, sharing in decision making and benefiting from the Partnership profits”.⁶² Lancaster’s work was one of the first to explore the history of the British department store. He argued that the domination of women workers in department stores led to them being “beyond the gaze of the labour historian’s usual concern for male workers” and that this was compounded by the lack of trade union membership in the retail sector.⁶³

The role of women in retail work has since been examined by Cox and Hopley through their work, *Shopgirls*, based on the BBC television series of the same name. This work plotted the history of the ‘shopgirl’ from the nineteenth century to present-day and provided an overview of the role of women in the rapidly changing retail sector. As previously acknowledged by Lancaster, Cox and Hopley argued that British shopgirls have been allowed by historians “to fall through the cracks” of British history and that their

⁶¹ Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store* (Leicester University Press, 1995), p. 125.

⁶² Lancaster, p. 149.

⁶³ Lancaster, p. 125.

role in work, consumer culture, living standards and politics has been overlooked.⁶⁴ By the mid-1960s, there were over a million women working in shops and they comprised approximately one fifth of Great Britain's population of women workers.⁶⁵ Their work highlighted how retail workers, especially those in non-managerial roles, were often neglected in retail histories, that largely focussed on high level management and business performance.

The expanding service sector offered employment opportunities for women, offering opportunities for part-time work that complimented a gendered division of labour in the home. Between 1951 and 1981, women's participation rate in the labour market increased from thirty-six percent to sixty-one percent.⁶⁶ Joan Woodward, in a study of saleswomen in retail distribution from the late 1950s, found that staff came from two distinct age groups: those who had just left education and those returning to work as their motherhood and domestic duties decreased.⁶⁷ She also highlighted that the highest proportion of temporary or part-time workers were the older members of staff.⁶⁸ Woodward's study investigated the experience of saleswoman and the key factors that affected attitudes and behaviours at work, examining the relationship between sales, customers and the supervisor.⁶⁹ However, women continued to be viewed as consumers rather than as workers.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Pamela Cox and Annabel Hobley, *Shopgirls: The True Story of Life Behind the Counter* (London: Hutchinson, 2014) p. xii.

⁶⁵ Cox and Hobley.

⁶⁶ Jane Lewis, pp. 65–66.

⁶⁷ Joan Woodward, *The Saleswoman: A Study of Attitudes and Behaviour in Retail Distribution* (Pitman, 1960), p. 10.

⁶⁸ Woodward, p. 10.

⁶⁹ Woodward.

⁷⁰ Dolly Smith Wilson, 'A New Look at the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Post-War Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 17.2 (2006), pp. 206–29 (p. 227).

The percentage of women working part-time increased dramatically from twelve percent in 1951 to forty-four percent by 1987 and these roles tended to be occupied by mothers.⁷¹ Despite perceived progress in labour market participation for women, Lewis argued that women found difficulties fulfilling the multiple roles required of them: wife, mother, and worker. This led to the majority of women's work remaining 'hidden' in the home while employment remained part-time and often casual. Lewis stated that employers created more part-time roles for two reasons: "to extend the length of time during which work was carried out, or to provide a flexible labour force".⁷² Flexible working became increasingly commonplace in the service industry as shopping and consumption habits changed.

Despite shortages across the nation following the Second World War, increased affluence of the 1950s, "gave rise to a new consumer movement" that searched for luxury or 'comfort' items that were competitively priced.⁷³ With only a relatively small proportion of income being spent on necessities by 1947, it was recognised that the rest was being spent on "goods important to identify formation or to provide 'psychological satisfaction'".⁷⁴ Hilton argued that consumerism was "a mobilising force at the heart of twentieth-century social and political history" which highlighted the importance of not only the consumer, but also the producer.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Jane Lewis, p. 75.

⁷² Jane Lewis, p. 75.

⁷³ Matthew Hilton, 'The Female Consumer and the Politics of Consumption in Twentieth-Century Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 45.1 (2002), pp. 103–28 (p. 107).

⁷⁴ Matthew Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 137–38.

⁷⁵ Hilton, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement*, p. 1.

Individual histories of the retail businesses offer case studies of retailers within the broader national social and economic perspectives. Judi Bevan in *The Rise & Fall of Marks & Spencer* identified how the economic status of the United Kingdom impacted and influenced the business of Marks & Spencer (M&S) for example, the impact of the economic boom of the mid to late 1980s which created a 'Shop till you drop' mantra of aggressive consumerism.⁷⁶ Her work was aimed at a general readership and situated the business within the broader economic context. Bevan evaluated the role of the chairman alongside the advantages and challenges of the times of their premiership.⁷⁷

Similarly, *A Legend of Retailing*, which focussed on House of Fraser, charted the history of the department stores from their beginnings through to 1990, presenting the history of the multiple within the broader economic context. The work, instigated by concern over the future of the retailing group's archives offered a comprehensive history built using rich archival material including minute books, reports, accounts, catalogues, press cuttings and photographs.⁷⁸ Through situating House of Fraser in the broader political and economic context, Michael Moss and Alison Turton provided a greater understanding into the reactions of high-level management and the board during difficulties such as the recession and recovery in the 1970s.⁷⁹ Both of these histories focus on the response and reaction of senior management rather than of employees and their experience periods of instability and uncertainty.

⁷⁶ Judi Bevan, *The Rise and Fall of Marks & Spencer* (Profile Books, 2007), p. 75.

⁷⁷ For the example of Rick Greenbury in the recession of 1991, see Bevan, p. 122.

⁷⁸ Michael Moss and Alison Turton, *A Legend of Retailing: House of Fraser* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989).

⁷⁹ Moss and Turton, pp. 228–29..

Other historians of retail history have focused on moments of change in the industry to examine how these shifts have had broader effects culturally and economically. Gareth Shaw and Andrew Alexander examined how methods of retailing changed as consumer needs changed: stores became self-service to alleviate waiting times and to allow for browsing.⁸⁰ They argued that co-operative societies pioneered the early developments of self-service within retailers in Britain.⁸¹ In 1947, there were only ten self-service stores but by 1950 there were five hundred.⁸² As well as decreasing queueing times for customers, self-service allowed stores to increase their net profits without reducing prices by lowering the cost of wages in relation to sales, revolutionising the retail business. Reductions in the initial postwar period were not able to be passed from the majority of retailers to customers because of resale price maintenance, however, co-operative stores were able to pass on some savings through their dividend schemes.⁸³ Shaw and Alexander highlighted that while supermarkets capitalised on the opportunities presented by self-service, they were unable to fully realise this potential until retail price maintenance was removed which provided an advantage for the pioneering co-operative stores.⁸⁴ However, co-operative stores were unable to compete with the product range, store size and after the Resale Prices Act, cost savings for customers.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Gareth Shaw and Andrew Alexander, 'British Co-Operative Societies as Retail Innovators: Interpreting the Early Stages of the Self-Service Revolution', *Business History*, 50.1 (2008), pp. 62–78 (p. 63).

⁸¹ Shaw and Alexander, p. 63.

⁸² Dawn Nell and others, 'Investigating Shopper Narratives of the Supermarket in Early Post-War England, 1945-75', *Oral History*, 37.1 (2009), pp. 61–73 (p. 64).

⁸³ Shaw and Alexander, 'British co-operative societies as retail innovators: Interpreting the early stages of the self-service revolution', p. 73.

⁸⁴ Shaw and Alexander, p. 75.

⁸⁵ Shaw and Alexander, p. 75.

As retailers grew, industry leaders actively challenged and attempted to influence policy to enable them to compete and meet consumer demands. Helen Mercer analysed how the Resale Prices Act 1964 impacted the relationships of retailers and suppliers in the broader political and economic context of the United Kingdom.⁸⁶ Mercer argued that the positions of both businesses and political parties was complex and varied greatly; Jack Cohen, the founder of Tesco, ran a campaign against resale price maintenance,⁸⁷ the Conservative Party worried that they would lose the support of independent retailers if they supported the act, and Boots, while wanting to pass on price reductions to customers, wanted to support the manufacturers in maintaining a standard, fair price for their goods.⁸⁸ Prior to 1964, the manufacturers of products decided the price that their products could be resold for at retailers which controlled the margins that the sellers could make, Mercer argued that the Resale Prices Act shifted “economic dominance” from the manufacturers to the retailers.⁸⁹ She portrayed how the act was a “watershed in British economic history”, allowing multiple retailers to dominate the market and changed elements of modern society from the composition of British high streets to human health and the environment.⁹⁰ These histories similarly engage with high-level decision-making with regard to the implementation of self-service and engaging in political campaigns but

⁸⁶ Helen Mercer, ‘The Abolition of Resale Price Maintenance in Britain in 1964: A Turning Point for British Manufacturers?’, *Working Papers in Economic History*, 39.98 (1998), p. 1.

⁸⁷ Peter Gurney, ‘The Battle of the Consumer in Postwar Britain’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 77.4 (2005), pp. 956–87 (p. 974).

⁸⁸ Mercer, ‘The Abolition of Resale Price Maintenance in Britain in 1964: A Turning Point for British Manufacturers?’, p. 9.

⁸⁹ Helen Mercer, ‘Retailer–Supplier Relationships before and after the Resale Prices Act, 1964: A Turning Point in British Economic History?’, *Enterprise & Society*, 15.1 (2014), pp. 132–65 (p. 160).

⁹⁰ Mercer, ‘Retailer–Supplier Relationships before and after the Resale Prices Act, 1964: A Turning Point in British Economic History?’, p. 159.

demonstrate how decisions at senior management level had ramifications for all those involved in the business.

While retailers have had a significant impact on society and culture, their workforce is often neglected in histories of retail and consumption. Where employees are taken into consideration, focus tends to remain on those in positions of power who hold senior management posts. This project aims to examine how Partnership systems and Partners behaved and reacted in moments of change and challenge in the retail industry. It will also make efforts to contribute to the dearth of material that focuses on non-managerial employees, rather than senior management and business performance.

1.4 Studies of the John Lewis Partnership

Historical analysis of the JLP has been limited and focussed generally towards the origins of the Partnership and its founder, John Spedan Lewis. The founder himself wrote two books about the origins of the Partnership and its structure during his time as Chairman as well as letters and editorials in the Partnership's in-house publication, *The Gazette*. His first book, *Partnership For All*, was published in 1948 and discussed the premise of his experiment, outlining his rationale and vision for the JLP.⁹¹ The second book, *Fairer Shares*, published in 1954, included the subtitle "A possible advance in civilisation and perhaps the only alternative to Communism".⁹² As shown by the bold subtitle, *Fairer Shares*, worked to advertise Spedan Lewis's experiment as an alternative business model and highlighted its potential for further application. *Partnership For All*

⁹¹ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All* (Kerr-Cross Publishing, 1948).

⁹² John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*.

and *Fairer Shares* will be used throughout this thesis to reference how Spedan Lewis constructed the various structures and ideology of the Partnership.

Although the two books were published with only six years separating them, there were many significant events in the Partnership that occurred between their publications. In 1950, Spedan Lewis considered his experiment a success and signed the Second Trust Settlement, in which he transferred his remaining shares to the trust and gave up his ultimate control of the Partnership.⁹³ Spedan Lewis also selected his successor as Chairman, Sir Bernard Miller, and promoted him to First Vice Chairman in 1950.⁹⁴ Sir Bernard Miller then took over as chairman in 1955 when John Spedan Lewis retired.⁹⁵

Spedan Lewis's works will be used to examine the differences between intent and actuality and the events that have led to deviation from the founder's plan. Further work of John Spedan Lewis over the course of his chairmanship and retirement is well-documented in editorials and letters that he authored and were then published in *The Gazette. Partnership For All* and *Fairer Shares* form the foundation of all other literature surrounding the JLP, frequently used within the business to contextualise and demonstrate his intent in structuring the Partnership. Both publications emphasised the uniqueness of the JLP as created by Spedan Lewis who claimed that the growth of the business into a Partnership was organic and originated from his own experiences and his experience and reflections on working alongside his father.⁹⁶ The narrative created by

⁹³ John Lewis Partnership, 'Supplement', *The Gazette*, 29 April 1950, pp. i–xi.

⁹⁴ Jonathan Blatchford, 'John Lewis & Partners Memory Store', *Sir Bernard Miller*, 2020 <https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/people/movers_and_shakers/chairmen_of_the_john_lewis_partnership/sir_bernard_miller-3> [accessed 14 April 2020].

⁹⁵ Cox, p. 150.

⁹⁶ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*. p. ix.

Spedan Lewis declared the primary motivation for the creation of the Partnership was for the benefit of all those employed by the Partnership, however, as the literature surrounding the JLP has developed, this narrative has been critically analysed.

Several books have been published about John Spedan Lewis and the origins of the John Lewis Partnership aimed at a more general readership. The most comprehensive of these is *Spedan's Partnership*, published in 2010 written by retired Partner, Peter Cox.⁹⁷ Cox interviewed “more than 100 working and retired Partners during his research” as well as using material from the JLP archive.⁹⁸ Cox charted the history of the Partnership from its conception to the early 2000s, providing contextual information and anecdotes on major points and figures from the JLP's history.⁹⁹ Overall, while offering an in-depth and accessible history of the JLP, Cox positioned the Partnership model similarly to Spedan Lewis, demonstrating the legacy of the JLP and hopes for politicians of the future to recognise the potential of employee-ownership.¹⁰⁰

Other volumes have focused on particular aspects of the business. In celebration of one-hundred and fifty years of John Lewis, *A Very British Revolution: 150 Years of John Lewis* was published in 2014 as the first book to “trace the 150-year history of John Lewis”.¹⁰¹ Focussing mainly on the department stores of JLP rather than the whole Partnership, *A Very British Revolution* made use of the unrivalled access to the archives

⁹⁷ Cox.

⁹⁸ John Lewis Partnership, 'Inside Story', *The Gazette*, 1 October 2010, p. 4.

⁹⁹ John Lewis Partnership, 'Inside Story', p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Cox, pp. 295–98.

¹⁰¹ Jonathan Glancey, *A Very British Revolution: 150 Years of John Lewis* (Laurence King Publishing, 2014).

to include a range of photographs that highlighted key points of John Lewis's history for a general readership.¹⁰²

The founder, Spedan Lewis, has been tied to other influential businesspeople, contrasting and comparing methods and actions between them. Carol Kennedy included the Lewis family in her book, *The Merchant Princes*, alongside the Sainsbury and Cadbury families. Kennedy used the examples of Sainsbury, Cadbury, and the John Lewis Partnership to argue that “when family companies are run consistently for generations, they build a culture that outlives the family”.¹⁰³ The Lewis family also formed the basis for a recent history of the Partnership. Glendinning focuses on the familial relationships to explore the history of the JLP using corporate and family archives.¹⁰⁴ The biographical approach offers insight to the family dynamic that shaped the Partnership and comments on the endurance and success of Spedan Lewis's experiment in industrial democracy. These texts both analyse the role of the family in the development of the Partnership but focus on the individuals involved at the highest level in the organisation, rather than those working throughout the business.

The Partnership has also been utilised in business case studies. Jack Quarter used the JLP as one of eleven case studies to explore businesses that have focussed *Beyond the Bottom Line* using alternative business methods, argued for social betterment or had philanthropical aims. Other examples from the United Kingdom included were: The Scott Bader Commonwealth, The Baxi Partnership, Tullis Russell and The Body Shop.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Glancey.

¹⁰³ Carol Kennedy, *The Merchant Princes: Family, Fortune and Philanthropy* (Hutchinson, 2000), p. 281.

¹⁰⁴ Victoria Glendinning, *Family Business: An Intimate History of John Lewis & The Partnership* (William Collins, 2021).

¹⁰⁵ Jack Quarter, *Beyond the Bottom Line: Socially Innovate Business Owners* (Quorum Books, 2000).

Quarter highlighted the structural changes to the JLP made by John Spedan Lewis but also the underlying paternalistic nature of the structure: “Even though he opened up opportunities for employee participation, he did not want to challenge the sovereignty of management”.¹⁰⁶ He argued that this nature has continued beyond Spedan Lewis’ Chairmanship leaving Partners feeling disenfranchised with the democratic system in place, stating that “a substantial minority remain apathetic” despite efforts to encourage participation.¹⁰⁷

Comparatively, Liam Byrne focussed on John Spedan Lewis as an influential entrepreneur and included him in his list of “ten entrepreneurs who built Britain”.¹⁰⁸ Spedan Lewis was included in the list for his contribution to the retail sector as well the structure of the Partnership. Byrne highlighted how the Partnership became recognised in Liberal propaganda in 1929 following its early successes and, similarly to previous works listed, revisited the founding narrative in celebrating the continued success of the Partnership after the death of its founder.¹⁰⁹ These publications are broad introductions into the history of the Partnership and have highlighted some of the problems more broadly within its democratic structures. They also signalled the importance of language used within the Partnership through the referral of employees as ‘Partners’ and the paternalistic origins of the JLP which begin to challenge John Spedan Lewis’s narrative of the founding myth.

¹⁰⁶ Quarter, p. 17.

¹⁰⁷ Quarter, p. 24.

¹⁰⁸ Liam Byrne, *Dragons: Ten Entrepreneurs Who Built Britain* (Head of Zeus, 2016).

¹⁰⁹ Byrne, p. 439.

While there is limited historical and political analysis focused on the JLP, rather than the founder, the Partnership has been the subject of several in-depth economic and organisational studies into its corporate governance and the role of its democratic structures. In 1992, Keith Bradley and Simon Taylor positioned the JLP as an industry leader and argued for the further application of the JLP “human resource strategy” stating the Partnership approach “has been associated with considerable commercial success, as well as unusual stability in the workforce, in an industry where turnover is typically very high”.¹¹⁰ Bradley and Taylor considered the JLPs structure to have been ahead of competitors in the 1970s and early 1980s who searched for ways to increase productivity; by perceiving their employees as valuable assets within their business structure, JLP had an advantage of a “committed and well-motivated workforce”.¹¹¹ This was demonstrated in their analysis of productivity rates that compared compound of growth rate of the JLP against that of Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury and Tesco, showing that the JLP achieved “the highest growth of productivity of both capital and labour”.¹¹² Bradley and Taylor argued that customer service and people were the main cause of the Partnership’s strong performance and highlighted that in comparison to competing retailers, such as House of Fraser, Sainsburys and Marks & Spencer, JLP recruited fewer part-time workers.

In-depth research on the democratic structures of the JLP has been conducted by Abby Cathcart. Cathcart based her doctoral research on the democratic processes of the JLP at the School of Management, University of Leicester. Her thesis examined the meaning of democracy within the JLP and situated the Partnership within broader debates

¹¹⁰ Bradley and Taylor, p. 1.

¹¹¹ Bradley and Taylor, p. 2.

¹¹² Bradley and Taylor, p. 130.

about the organisation of work.¹¹³ Cathcart focused on a democracy project conducted by the JLP between 2004 and 2007 throughout which she interviewed members of management and employees, observed key democratic forums and accessed *The Gazette* archive.¹¹⁴ Cathcart's subsequent works have utilised the research conducted throughout her doctorate to continue her investigation into the competing interests of members of management and rank-and-file Partners within the democratic structure of the JLP.¹¹⁵ Her work contributed to literature on organisational democracy by highlighting how JLP has been subject to degeneration of its democratic structures and how changes enabled the meaning of democracy in JLP to become contested.¹¹⁶ Cathcart used three of Foucault's concepts to analyse the use of organisational democracy in JLP: "disciplinary power; regimes of truth; and resistance".¹¹⁷ She argued that, within the different structures of the JLP, "the meaning of democracy is heavily contested and fraught with contradictions and paradoxes", which rather than devaluing the Partnership in studies of organisational democracy, makes it a 'hybrid' with the potential to update and inform the field as the largest co-owned business in the United Kingdom.¹¹⁸

Other aspects of the JLP have also been investigated further in organisation and management studies. For example, the JLP's publication, *The Gazette*, was used as part of a larger study examining the uses of house magazines and is currently being used in

¹¹³ Abby Cathcart, 'Directing Democracy: The Case of the John Lewis Partnership' (University of Leicester, 2009), p. 3.

¹¹⁴ Abby Cathcart, 'Directing Democracy: Competing Interests and Contested Terrain in the John Lewis Partnership', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 55.4 (2013), pp. 601–20 (p. 602).

¹¹⁵ Abby Cathcart, 'Paradoxes of Participation: Non-Union Workplace Partnership in John Lewis', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25.6 (2014), pp. 762–80; Cathcart, 'Directing Democracy: Competing Interests and Contested Terrain in the John Lewis Partnership'.

¹¹⁶ Cathcart, 'Directing Democracy: Competing Interests and Contested Terrain in the John Lewis Partnership', p. 602.

¹¹⁷ Cathcart, 'Directing Democracy: The Case of the John Lewis Partnership', p. 288.

¹¹⁸ Cathcart, 'Directing Democracy: The Case of the John Lewis Partnership', pp. 299–301.

the ongoing project developing an institutional history of internal communications in the United Kingdom.¹¹⁹ Nicholson, Beadle and Slack examined how JLP used corporate philanthropy and how the involvement of Partners in the deliberation process evidenced moral agency.¹²⁰ Their examination, using eight focus groups, demonstrated the moral agency of Partners that was enabled through the Partnership structures and the enduring influence of the founder.¹²¹

Salaman and Storey, in *A Better Way of Doing Business*, explored the position of the JLP within the different schemes of worker participation and industrial democracy, examining how the business was managed over a twenty-five-year period from 1990.¹²² They argued for the need of a detached assessment of the JLP model in a period where shareholder-value has become an increasingly self-destructive priority in both the markets of the United Kingdom and the United States of America.¹²³ Salaman and Storey questioned whether or not “there is a role for trade unions in an employee-owned firm”, suggesting that unions may be interpreted as “incompatible or unnecessary” however, Salaman and Storey argued that “organizations work more effectively when there is representation” and that unions can provide a safeguard for the voices of employees and representation in cases of conflict.¹²⁴ It is the JLP’s position as a hybrid of “elements of

¹¹⁹ Heller and Rowlinson, ‘The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets’; Institute of Internal Communication, ‘Celebrating 75 Years of IoIC with Michael Heller and Joe Chick’, The Future of Internal Communication <<https://www.ioic.org.uk/resource/celebrating-75-years-of-ioic-with-michael-heller-and-joe-chick.html>>; An Institutional History of Internal Communication in the UK, ‘About the Project’, 2024 <<https://historyofinternalcomms.org/about-the-project/>> [accessed 26 August 2024].

¹²⁰ Helen Nicholson, Ron Beadle, and Richard Slack, ‘Corporate Philanthropy as a Context for Moral Agency, a MacIntyrean Enquiry’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 167 (2019), pp. 589–603 (p. 590).

¹²¹ Nicholson, Beadle, and Slack, p. 599.

¹²² Salaman and Storey.

¹²³ Salaman and Storey, pp. 1–2.

¹²⁴ Salaman and Storey, p. 65.

co-operativism and elements of from more traditional models including private limited companies, employee stock ownership plans and charitable trusts” that will be contextualised within broader political and historical themes to show how different elements of the structure are brought to the forefront dependent on the influences of the period.¹²⁵

The most recent contributions to historical research surrounding the JLP has come from Alix R. Green, focused on the blacklisting of the John Lewis Partnership in the 1970s and the JLP’s recruitment of Partners from the Commonwealth.¹²⁶ Green used the example of the ‘blacking’ of the JLP to show how company archives can be used to enhance analysis of policy and government by political historians.¹²⁷ As part of an edited collection on retailing and the impact of the end of empire, Green examined the Partnership’s policy towards the recruitment of arrivals from the Commonwealth and how policy and practice fed into ideas of race and identity through membership to the Partnership and citizenship more broadly.¹²⁸ In both pieces, Green argued that business histories and company archives have the potential to be integrated more broadly and “systematically into historical research” to aid in answering a range of “social, cultural, moral, as well as, political and economic, questions”.¹²⁹ This project, as part of ongoing

¹²⁵ Cathcart, ‘Directing Democracy: The Case of the John Lewis Partnership’, p. 299.

¹²⁶ Green, “‘Secret Lists and Sanctions’: The Blacklisting of the John Lewis Partnership and the Politics of Pay in 1970s Britain”; Alix R Green, “‘Race’, Retailing and the Windrush Generation: Principle and Practice in the John Lewis Partnership’s Recruitment of Commonwealth Arrivals 1950-1962’, in *Retail and Community: Business, Charity and the End of Empire*, ed. by George Campbell Gosling, Alix R Green, and Grace Millar (Bristol University Press, 2024).

¹²⁷ Green, “‘Secret Lists and Sanctions’: The Blacklisting of the John Lewis Partnership and the Politics of Pay in 1970s Britain’, pp. 229–30.

¹²⁸ Green, “‘Race’, Retailing and the Windrush Generation: Principle and Practice in the John Lewis Partnership’s Recruitment of Commonwealth Arrivals 1950-1962’.

¹²⁹ Green, “‘Secret Lists and Sanctions’: The Blacklisting of the John Lewis Partnership and the Politics of Pay in 1970s Britain’, p. 212.

collaboration with the John Lewis Partnership Heritage Centre, builds upon these arguments, exploring how members of the Partnership perceived the democratic structures of the JLP and how they were viewed by a broader audience including government and other businesses.

Much of the literature centred on the JLP has focused on the success of the business as an alternative model. This has been explored with regard to the founder and through organisational studies focusing on the Partnership's success as a retailer. While acknowledging the success and longevity of the JLP as an alternative business model, this project aims to centre the experience of Partners to highlight the tensions and complexities inherent in the Partnership model. This approach draws attention to voices neglected in previous studies of the Partnership and offers insight into contemporary postwar debates around participation, membership, and work.

1.5 The John Lewis Partnership and its use of history

The JLP has a long-established awareness of its history and has recognized the value of the business archive as a resource for its continuing practice, investing around £2 million in 2012 to build a heritage centre and archive in Cookham, Berkshire. This demonstrated recognition of the archival collections as a valuable asset.¹³⁰ The investment enabled archival holdings to be moved from Stevenage and Carlisle to a purpose-built location that not only houses the business records but was also designed to provide a space for those records to be used. As stated by Green, the Partnership's

¹³⁰ Amanda Hall, 'A Look inside the John Lewis Partnership Heritage Centre', *Maidenhead Advertiser*, 7 October 2013 <<https://www.maidenhead-advertiser.co.uk/news/17308/VIDEO--A-look-inside-the.html>> [accessed 29 January 2024].

archives contained “the rich collections of a business invested in its own past”.¹³¹ The collections are used by Partners in current business activity and by retired Partners who volunteer to work on archival projects, as well as being used to inform the research of external parties.¹³²

This thesis, developed from a collaborative research project, is another example of members of the Partnership demonstrating an awareness and interest in the history of the business, engaging in collaboration with researchers to develop further knowledge about the context, contents and applications of the business and collections. The attitude of the Partnership towards enquiry and criticism was instilled by the founder, John Spedan Lewis, who had declared the Partnership an ‘experiment’. Following the publication of his books, Spedan Lewis encouraged readers to send “criticisms or suggestions” to either himself or the editor of *The Gazette* regarding the Partnership.¹³³ As seen with the sociological study, *Experiment in Industrial Relations*, commissioned as part of the fiftieth anniversary and subsequent academic evaluations such as that of Salaman and Storey, the JLP has not shied away from criticism.¹³⁴

Research into corporate and business histories was critically discussed in the 1980s by Smith and Steadman and Hordes who warned of the potential traps for historians. Stanley Hordes questioned the validity of commissioned histories by businesses and argued that historians needed to ensure individual credibility, as well as

¹³¹ Green, “‘Secret Lists and Sanctions’: The Blacklisting of the John Lewis Partnership and the Politics of Pay in 1970s Britain”, p. 213.

¹³² Judy Faraday, ‘John Lewis & Partners Memory Store’, *A New Home for Our Archive*, 2018 <https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/community/john_lewis_community/heritage_centre/a_new_home_for_our_archive> [accessed 5 May 2021].

¹³³ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*. p. xv.

¹³⁴ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward; Salaman and Storey.

avoid becoming public relations agents for companies.¹³⁵ He concluded that historians working with or for businesses needed to ensure that their responsibility to interpret the past was paramount and that research be carried out “in the most objective, unbiased, professional manner possible”.¹³⁶ Smith and Steadman focussed on the role of the employee in the development of corporate history and warned of nostalgia in personal testimonies in workplaces.¹³⁷ They argued that history of corporations was vital to understanding the traditions of the present and dispelling myths of “good-old-days syndrome”.¹³⁸ Both works highlighted the value of corporate and business histories so long as the responsibility to the field was recognised by the historian or researcher.

Terry Gourvish argued that the value of analysis from business historians on performance in businesses is portrayed in case studies that have influenced corporate strategy.¹³⁹ He stated that the role of business historians is found in “evaluating the enterprise within the universe it inhabited, taking into account the competitive and regulatory challenges it faced”.¹⁴⁰ In analysing the changes made to democratic structures and Partners’ perception and participation, the Partnership will be situated in its historical and political context, highlighting key events and their effects on business strategies.

¹³⁵ Stanley M Hordes, ‘Does He Who Pays the Piper Call the Tune? Historians, Ethics, and the Community’, *The Public Historian*, 8.1 (1986), pp. 53–56 (p. 54).

¹³⁶ Hordes, p. 56.

¹³⁷ George David Smith and Laurence E Steadman, ‘Present Value of Corporate History’, *Harvard Business Review*, 59.6 (1981), pp. 164–73 (p. 165).

¹³⁸ Smith and Steadman, pp. 165–68.

¹³⁹ Terry Gourvish, ‘What Can Business History Tell Us about Business Performance?’, *Competition & Change*, 10.4 (2006), pp. 375–92 (p. 388).

¹⁴⁰ Gourvish, p. 389.

The importance of the relationship between the business historian, the organisation studied, and the company activist was highlighted in a recent overview of business history.¹⁴¹ These relationships were argued to be valuable for both archivists and historians who have a shared vested interest in the preservation of corporate archives that sometimes hold precarious positions in businesses.¹⁴² This project was developed out of an existing successful collaborative relationship between Dr Alix Green, University of Essex and Judy Faraday, John Lewis Partnership Archive.¹⁴³ The collaborative nature of the doctoral project enabled further access to archival resources and the expertise of the archival team with an in-depth working knowledge of the Partnership structures.

Previous collaboration between academics and the JLP to produce in-depth examinations of the JLP has already proved to be valuable for the business and researchers through work such as *Experiment for Industrial Democracy*.¹⁴⁴ This collaborative project builds on this previous work, allowing for in-depth research to be carried out to a brief but with the scope for the researcher to follow their own research leads. While the initial project brief outlined the overall focus on co-ownership in the JLP between 1964 and 2014, the themes examined through the chapters were shaped through discussions based on areas of shared research interest. The research dialogue created assisted in the creation of a direct link between historical interpretation and the

¹⁴¹ John F. Wilson and others, *Business History: A Research Overview* (Routledge, 2022).

¹⁴² Wilson and others, p. 50.

¹⁴³ Business Archives Council, 'Interested in Academic Collaborations? New Resources Available', *Business Archives Council*, 2020
<https://businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/news/2020/9/academic_archivist_collaboration_resources>
[accessed 25 April 2024].

¹⁴⁴ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward.

strategic and operational conduct of the business as proposed by Green and Lee.¹⁴⁵ Themes were then developed through archival research and the oral history interviews conducted as part of this project. The only challenge faced in terms of archival access was due to the Covid-19 pandemic, rather than any concerns or restrictions from the corporate archive.

1.6 Methodology

The role of the ‘Partner’ within the JLP will be examined as citizens of a “state within a state” to understand the relationship between workers and the organisation.¹⁴⁶ Elements of citizenship experienced in the Partnership through shared ideology, will be used to link and understand themes that both support and challenge the democratic institutions of the Partnership: power and accountability, conflicting loyalties, and diversity. Exploring the limits and challenges of Partnership helps to understand its functionality to Partners and their respective power determined by their ability to interact with their membership.

The role of Spedan Lewis as founder of the JLP will also be examined to understand the underlying ideology of the Partnership and the rationale behind the democratic structures which, while undergoing periods of expansion and contraction, remained largely unchanged until the 2000s. As governing documents that entrenched the principles of Partnership into the business, the trust settlements, which legally defined the JLP as a co-owned enterprise, and the constitution, including rules and regulations,

¹⁴⁵ Alix R Green and Erin Lee, ‘From Transaction to Collaboration: Redefining the Academic-Archivist Relationship in Business Collections’, *Archives and Records*, 41.1 (2020), pp. 32–51 (p. 32).

¹⁴⁶ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, pp. 209–10.

will then be considered as institutions through which each Partner was granted rights and responsibilities through their continued employment. The role of the Central Board and Trustees of the Constitution will also be examined as the senior bodies responsible for the steer of the JLP.

The main collection of primary sources that will be used in this project are held by the John Lewis Partnership Heritage Centre and Archive. The range of sources held by the archive are similar to that used by Moss and Turton in their history of the House of Fraser group: meeting minutes, reports, memorandums and internal publications.¹⁴⁷ These will be used alongside oral history interviews that were conducted as part of this project with Partners, now retired but who were engaged with the Partnership's various democratic structures. The testimonies offer a unique range of perspectives on engagement of Partners within the Partnership structure and lead to a greater understanding of participation within the JLP to see how democracy was used. By using the oral testimonies in conjunction with other sources from the JLP heritage centre and archive, an additional layer of analysis is gained into how the Partnership aimed their democracy to be understood versus how those who were engaged in the systems perceived it.

The role of oral histories in a national business or corporate context has been examined by Rob Perks who provided an overview of business and corporate oral history in Britain to determine the value of the "methodology for both business historians and for corporations".¹⁴⁸ Perks highlighted that there was a lack of "methodological dialogue

¹⁴⁷ Moss and Turton.

¹⁴⁸ Rob Perks, "'Corporations Are People Too!': Business and Corporate Oral History in Britain", *Oral History*, 38.1 (2010), pp. 36–54 (p. 39).

between business and oral historians in the UK” which led to few interviews being deposited and held in archives.¹⁴⁹ He argued that oral histories, as recognised by business historians, provided more history to businesses and corporations and can preserve practices and routines that may otherwise be lost.¹⁵⁰ As identified in work of the British Library, storied tradition has become established in companies or developed as part of a brand, to foster employee and customer loyalty.¹⁵¹ The development and perception of these traditions can be drawn out with oral testimony to offer understanding of these complex narratives.

By conducting oral histories in businesses, a different perspective can be gained, “an employee-led experience of working for a business (as opposed to the more formal company-led structure of business records)”.¹⁵² Perks argued that oral histories were able to highlight disparities across businesses where interpretations of events can vary significantly between sites: “One, which focused on a building society in the north of England, revealed a significant disconnect between head office and individual branches, and differing understandings of the organisation’s own history”.¹⁵³ He stated that “oral history is uniquely well-placed to explore these complex relationships between the personal, the public and the corporate” and argued that oral historians had a vital role in capturing and offering insight into cultures and identities of the workplace.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Perks, p. 38.

¹⁵⁰ Perks, p. 41.

¹⁵¹ Perks, p. 43.

¹⁵² Katy Logan in Perks, p. 41.

¹⁵³ Perks, p. 43.

¹⁵⁴ Perks, p. 49.

Interviews have formed part of investigations previously conducted into the democratic institutions of the Partnership; however, these were structured, rather than following a narrative approach. In their study of the Partnership, *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, Flanders et al. used a combination of oral and written answers in a survey, drawing on the experiences of four-hundred and sixty-eight Partners.¹⁵⁵ The questions were included in the published volume as an appendix offering context on which sections were answered orally or written.¹⁵⁶ As part of the attitude survey questionnaire, the research team included a knowledge test that assessed each participant on the democratic structures of the Partnership before answering oral questions.¹⁵⁷ The section to be answered orally consisted of forty-seven questions that asked participants about their job role and opinion towards various aspects of the structure of the Partnership.¹⁵⁸ For some questions answers were constructed using scales to indicate frequency or to standardise positive versus negative responses such as “1 very sorry, 2 a bit sorry, 3 wouldn’t really mind or 4 don’t know” when asked the question “Could you look at the phrases on the card, and give me the number of the one which comes nearest to what you would feel if the Partnership stopped providing the amenities it provides now?”.¹⁵⁹

The team used a random sample method rather than calling for volunteer participants but stated that their sample was not representative because restrictions had been placed on the limits of the study.¹⁶⁰ Flanders et al. only researched the department store aspect of the business and limited the main survey interviews to “full-time rank and

¹⁵⁵ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 77.

¹⁵⁶ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 226–38.

¹⁵⁷ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 226.

¹⁵⁸ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 229–36.

¹⁵⁹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 229–36.

¹⁶⁰ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 77.

file workers only, leaving out part-timers working less than thirty hours a week, and all members of management”.¹⁶¹ Flanders et al. acknowledged that these restrictions disproportionately excluded married women from the final sample as the main group of part-time workers, however, this was argued to aid their research aims:

“[...] as one would expect, [part-time workers] attitude to everything that goes on at work is generally more detached than that of full-time workers...very much less likely to be regular readers of *The Gazette* and the branch *Chronicle*. It follows that they were also less likely than their colleagues to be involved in the Partnership system”.¹⁶²

However, this exclusion led to an increasingly important demographic of the Partnership being ignored, as the number of part-time positions in the business only grew with the extension of trading hours. The content of the interviews and survey responses formed the research team’s conclusions on the Partnership ideology and argued that Partners that “showed more interest in the Partnership system would also attach greater value to its representative institutions and to its social and welfare facilities, whose administration lies in the hands of those institutions”.¹⁶³

Within this project, oral history participants were retired Partners who volunteered to participate by responding to an editorial about the project placed in the magazine, *Connections*. The magazine was first published in July 2006 with the aim to “bring retired Partners news and views from the Partnership, and also gives us [JLP] a channel to pass on information that is of particular relevance and inter interest to them”.¹⁶⁴ While planning the project, the aim had been to interview twelve participants, however, the project

¹⁶¹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 78.

¹⁶² Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 78–79.

¹⁶³ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 189.

¹⁶⁴ Fay Norris quoted in John Lewis Partnership, ‘All the Right Connections’, *The Gazette*, 8 July 2006.

appealed to greater range of responses and more interviews were conducted to ensure that the breadth of the research was covered, resulting in a total of twenty-four interviews. This was done in collaboration with the John Lewis Partnership Archive who began collecting oral history testimonies with linked themes so that interviews conducted for this research project would contribute to a larger single collection. As noted by Perks, the John Lewis Partnership has collected and used oral histories previously in “an innovative community archive approach led by former employees (‘partners’)”, so interviews conducted within this project will also build on existing collections held by the archive.¹⁶⁵

The approach used throughout the interviewing process was informed by research that followed similar methods, interviewing participants specifically on the topic of their working lives rather than a broad-based life history approach. The starting question of the interviews drew upon the flexible interviewing style used by Kathryn Haynes in her research into the accounting profession and motherhood. Haynes described using open invitations to stimulate participants in the beginning of interviews such as “‘Let’s talk about why and how you became an accountant’ or ‘Talk me through your story of becoming a mother’” which encouraged “lengthy accounts” that varied between participants.¹⁶⁶ Haynes’ project “aimed to explore the experiences and identities” of women accountants and focussed on “meaning and perception amongst participants”.¹⁶⁷

Interviews for this project were instigated in a similar way, with participants being asked to ‘Tell me how you got into the John Lewis Partnership’. The open invitation, in

¹⁶⁵ Perks, p. 41.

¹⁶⁶ Kathryn Haynes, ‘Other Lives in Accounting: Critical Reflections on Oral History Methodology in Action’, *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 21.3 (2010), pp. 221–31 (p. 225).

¹⁶⁷ Haynes, p. 225.

initial interviews, gained a similar response to Haynes with participants giving full accounts of their career path, providing an overview of the avenues that the interview could take. Haynes highlighted potential issues within the methodology of oral history when considering the power relations between the interviewer and participant in a business setting, stating that the level of disclosure in an interview could be potentially problematic for career relationships. This issue was mitigated in the development of this project by interviewing retired Partners who have a diminished stake in the current business but participants were also provided with the opportunity to restrict access to their interviews for a number of years, as they wished. The option of restricted access provided reassurance when discussing sensitive topics or conflicts within the business.

The collection of oral testimonies for this project began in the autumn of 2020 which resulted in challenges unique to the global pandemic of Covid-19 regarding the swift move to remote interviewing. Interviews had been expected to take place face-to-face, however due to the circumstances of recording interviews during a pandemic, all of the interviews were scheduled to take place remotely to ensure the safety and comfort of both the participant and the interviewer. Initial contact was made via email and interviews were arranged to take place via video or audio call depending on the participant's preference. Where participants had concerns over any aspect of the project, they were encouraged to contact the principal researcher to voice concerns. The majority of participants were open to the idea of being interviewed remotely with few noting concerns regarding the accessibility of the technology.

While face-to-face interviewing has been argued to be the "gold standard" of interviewing, researchers prior to the pandemic of 2020 had begun arguing the benefits

of using technologies such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) as an alternate method of conducting oral histories.¹⁶⁸ Hay-Gibson was prompted to use VoIP interviews in her PhD study of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) where she encountered difficulties contacting individual employees and reaching the business site.¹⁶⁹ The SME that Hay-Gibson used in research had previously been using VoIP applications in day-to-day business so the use of similar applications to conduct interviews complimented the running of the business and was less intrusive of the working environment.¹⁷⁰ Hay-Gibson argued that there was great potential in using VoIP technologies in interview providing that “new skills [are] learnt: presentation on-camera, a skill already needed in videoconferencing, must be combined with interview techniques to improve interviewer rapport with the participant for the change to collect more granular data”.¹⁷¹

Lo lacono et al. used two of the authors’ research areas to make observations about the use of Skype as a medium for conducting interviews with participants.¹⁷² They argued that VoIP technologies move “us towards an opportunity for a more democratic research process” through the removal of certain barriers for participants of studies.¹⁷³ When interviewing is undertaken remotely, the challenges of finding a suitable location for both the interviewer and interviewee are reduced, both logistically and financially. While one participant in research conducted by Lo lacono stated that a face-to-face interview was a “more three dimensional social experience”, others felt more comfortable

¹⁶⁸ Naomi Hay-Gibson, ‘Interviews via VoIP: Benefits and Disadvantages within a PhD Study of SMEs’, *Library and Information Research*, 33.105 (2009), pp. 1756–1086 (p. 40).

¹⁶⁹ Hay-Gibson, p. 40.

¹⁷⁰ Hay-Gibson, p. 40.

¹⁷¹ Hay-Gibson, p. 48.

¹⁷² Valeria Lo lacono, Paul Symonds, and David HK Brown, ‘Skype as a Tool for Qualitative Research Interviews’, *Sociological Research Online*, 21.2 (2016), pp. 103–17 (p. 104).

¹⁷³ Lo lacono, Symonds, and Brown, p. 107.

by being “able to remain in a safe location without imposing on each other’s personal space”.¹⁷⁴ This was a particularly important consideration within the context of the global pandemic.

While, Lo lacono et al. noted that potential barriers arose for specific groups when organising interviews using VoIP noting that “some people may be reluctant to embrace technology, especially people of an older age’, however, they did not find that to be the case in their experience of research.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, while it was considered as a potential barrier in the research of this project, the majority of participants saw the benefits of conducting interviews remotely and were willing to use the VoIP selected. In cases where it was determined not to be suitable, accommodations were made, and interviews were carried out by telephone. Copies of the interview shared with the participant prior to signing the recording agreement to ensure that participants felt shared authority over the interviews created as part of this project and time was taken to follow up with participants if any concerns were raised.

Both Lo lacono et al. and Hay-Gibson identified a key potential barrier in building rapport with interviewees. Hay-Gibson highlighted the behaviour and attitude of participants as an important consideration and suggested that there may be reluctance to participate via video because of personal privacy concerns as well as “technological literacy”.¹⁷⁶ Lo lacono et al. used regular communication with participants via email to aid in strengthening rapport prior to the interview.¹⁷⁷ Yow has stressed the importance of the

¹⁷⁴ Lo lacono, Symonds, and Brown, p. 110.

¹⁷⁵ Lo lacono, Symonds, and Brown, p. 108.

¹⁷⁶ Hay-Gibson, p. 44.

¹⁷⁷ Lo lacono, Symonds, and Brown, p. 109.

continuation of rapport-building between the narrator and interviewer in the initial stages of an interview where the narrator is determining the level of trust to place with the interviewer.¹⁷⁸ Yow highlighted nonverbal responses from interviewers as key during in-person interviews and suggested using responses such as a “nod, smile, shake your head to show that you are following the narrator’s story” as well as maintaining eye contact.¹⁷⁹ Maintaining eye contact during a remote interview using VoIP technologies can be difficult, however, La lacono et al. found that where the narrator and interviewer had not met in person prior to the interview, a lack of eye contact was not raised as an issue and with participants who were shy or introverted, minimal eye contact was suggested to be advantageous in getting them to open up.¹⁸⁰

By allocating two hours to each participant for interviews, the aim was to provide a comfortable and relaxed setting with minimal timing pressures to encourage participants to speak openly. There were also no set questions to allow for the narrative to flow as naturally as possible. Participants were offered a list of themes that were aimed to be discussed within interviews to offer guidance and in some cases, reassurance, to the topics that would be focussed on. The topics drew on their experiences of working in the Partnership, the democracy, extracurricular activities, and impressions of external organisations, including trade unions and competitors. These were decided through discussion with the archival team at the JLP heritage centre to incorporate the key themes of the project. As with the findings of Flanders et al., it is likely that by using the testimony of retired Partners who remained engaged with the Partnership and wished to speak

¹⁷⁸Valerie Yow, ‘Interviewing Techniques and Strategies’, in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by Alistair Thomson and Robert Perks, 3rd edn (Routledge, 2015), p. 159.

¹⁷⁹Yow, p. 159.

¹⁸⁰ Lo lacono, Symonds, and Brown, p. 109.

about their experiences, that their contributions will be in favour of the democratic processes of the Partnership. However, as the individuals interviewed as part of this project were retired, their testimonies were more candid, often offering praise and criticism in equal measure.

Through the use of oral histories and the business archives of the JLP, in particular, the national in-house publication, *The Gazette*, this thesis attempts to build an inclusive and representative view of the Partnership. Additional sources were gathered from the National Archives, Modern Records Centre, and the Co-operative Archive, to situate the Partnership within the wider political and social context. However, analysis of the Partnership will always be limited to representing the views of Partners who wished to be heard either through the self-selection process in the gathering of oral histories or from the journalism that focused broadly on reporting on the performance of the Partnership and its democracy and the individuals who chose to write to the editor to voice their opinions. As identified by Sonya Rose in her analysis of the People's War, collections of sources such as these cannot be truly representative, however, they do "allow us some insight into some peoples' concerns, anxieties, and hopes", offering insight into the subjectivities of membership to the JLP.¹⁸¹

1.7 Thesis structure

This project, begun in the year of the hundredth year of the Central Council, will echo themes discussed by Flanders et al. in their 1968 research project to examine how

¹⁸¹ Sonya O Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 26–27.

Partners interacted with and perceived the democratic structures and institutions of the JLP between 1964 and 2014, and the affect that changes to structures and institutions have had throughout this period. The first chapter will set the JLP in historical context, examining the rationale of John Spedan Lewis and how the democratic institutions were first set up in the Partnership. The Partnership's democracy replicated the national democratic institutions of the United Kingdom, establishing the JLP as, effectively, a small nation. Using testimony from retired Partners, reports from the councils and readers' letters from the national in-house magazine *The Gazette*, the experiences of Partners as citizens within the Partnership democracy are explored to demonstrate the influence and impact of democratic institutions on the working lives of Partners.

The chapters that follow focus on elements of membership to the Partnership, from leisure to ownership to examine the experience of Partners in the JLP as both citizens and co-owners. The second chapter examines the role of the JLP's leisure and welfare schemes in the benefits of being a Partner. The origins of the provision of welfare and leisure in the JLP are contextualised as part of a broader movement toward enlightened capitalism experienced at the turn of the twentieth century. While provisions for employees were not unique to the Partnership, Partners were given the opportunity and funding to organise and run their own social activities and clubs. However, the allocation of subsidy for leisure demonstrated clear class divides in what was considered a fundable activity as only activities that were deemed 'beneficial' to Partners would be funded. This condition demonstrated the pervasive patriarchal nature of the scheme which was frequently challenged by Partners who argued for a wider provision for leisure.

The benefits of being a member of the Partnership came with expectations of loyalty and duty of individuals to the JLP. The third chapter explores the conflict of interest between conflicting memberships of the Partnership and of trade unions and how the JLP model aimed to manage all industrial relations through their own internal institutions. These allowed Partners to raise issues with management both directly and indirectly. Institutions such as the Central and Branch Councils, Committees for Communication, and branch-based Registrars, as part of the critical side of business, were designed to be able to handle all matters that could result in industrial conflict. However, throughout the 1970s, the social and political climate promoted the role of trade unions and industrial action, impacting the Partnership in transport and service-based roles, which were highly unionised fields. Facing the challenge of external mechanisms, the JLP positioned itself away from union action and argued that the internal mechanisms and Partnership model were better at diffusing industrial tension than those of the government.

The fourth chapter revisits the Partnership's principles to understand how the JLP navigated the status of disabled Partners who fundamentally challenged the business on major constitutional issues and arguments of difference from their competitors. Following the Second World War, legislation that targeted the employment of disabled people was introduced for the first time. All employers with over twenty members of staff were expected to adhere to the government mandated quota scheme to employ a minimum of three percent of registered disabled people. The quota scheme was contentious for both employers and activists and was never truly enforced despite being in place until 1994. This chapter positions the JLP's response and management of the quota scheme and the subsequent 'Access to Work' scheme, alongside that of its competitors, Marks and

Spencer and JS Sainsbury and argues that the JLP faced similar challenges to the government in terms of citizenship and participation through the employment of disabled people, demonstrating the limits of membership to the JLP.

The final chapter examines the recurring theme of co-ownership deconstructing the responsibilities and duties of Partners as co-owners and their role in the decision-making process. Using the example of debates on Sunday trading and demutualisation from the 1990s, this chapter highlights the tensions in the identity of Partners who had the ability to shape their own working lives but who were also expected to prioritise their duty to the business over personal wants or needs. The result of both debates had a profound impact on the Partnership, leading to shift toward seven-day trading and investigations into the efficacy of the democracy in the business. The results of these investigations have since reshaped key institutions of the Partnership and impacted how Partners engage with the democracy and therefore how they exercise their rights as co-owners.

Overall, this thesis demonstrates how the Partnership model was contested by the challenges that faced the retail sector more broadly throughout the twentieth century. National debates on the nature of work and periods of economic strain brought the differences and tensions of the model to the fore, demonstrating both the strengths and limitations of the alternative model. The positioning of the JLP as a democratic organisation as well as a business offers insight into key debates of the twentieth century on citizenship, participation and belonging.

2 The Democratic Structures of the John Lewis Partnership

2.1 Introduction

John Spedan Lewis's experiment in industrial democracy began to take shape in Peter Jones, Sloane Square after he gained the business' controlling interest in 1914.¹ Originally, the experiment was seen as a way to improve Spedan Lewis's own business, then as it expanded the potential for broader applications as an alternative to traditional business structures became more distinct. Spedan saw the Partnership as a way to challenge how businesses can or should be run by offering an alternate method with the aim to benefit those involved across all levels of the business.²

Setting the context of the overall thesis, this chapter examines the structure of the democratic institutions of the John Lewis Partnership as first designed by John Spedan Lewis and how they operated up to a period of major change in the early 2000s. Spedan Lewis replicated the democratic institutions of the United Kingdom, establishing the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) effectively as a small nation that ruled over the John Lewis department stores and Waitrose grocery stores. Using business records such as reports from the councils and readers' letters from the national in-house magazine *The Gazette*, the experiences of Partners as citizens within the Partnership democracy are explored to demonstrate the influence and impact of democratic institutions on the working lives of Partners.

¹ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 37.

² John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*. p. ix.

Spedan's aims in setting up the Partnership are crucial to understanding how Partners viewed themselves and their role in the structure. As founder, he brought the various structures into being and explained his rationale through his published works and in the internal newspaper, that he presided over as editor for a number of years. In addition, he remained in the role of chairman from the Partnership's creation until his retirement in 1955, following his selection of his successor.³ Spedan's involvement in the Partnership continued and he used his standing as founder to attempt to influence the JLP until his death in 1963.⁴ Throughout this period, the experiment had been developing and expanding and in the new era, following the founder's death, the structures in the business had to balance Spedan's founding vision and the changing retail landscape.

Emphasised by Bernard Miller, the second chairman of the JLP, the sovereign authority in the Partnership was public opinion "informed, developed and expressed by journalism, representative, institutions and personal contacts".⁵ While this did not extend to a choice in management, beyond choosing to work for the JLP instead of other organisations, Miller argued that without the "backing of the general opinion of the Partnership, it will be unable to manage the Partnership efficiently and risk being in breach of the Constitution".⁶ If the chairman breached the constitution, they could be challenged by the democratic bodies and ultimately, be removed from the post.

While engagement with the democratic institutions of the Partnership did grow, they did not appeal to every Partner in the business. Miller acknowledged that the JLP

³ Cox, p. 149.

⁴ Cox, pp. 150–52.

⁵ Sir Bernard Miller, 'Foreword' in Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 16–17.

⁶ Sir Bernard Miller, 'Foreword' in Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 16–17.

structure required more from Partners than employees of other firms and that many would not want to be heavily involved in the democracy. However, Miller argued that “the real test of such a Partnership is the size of the minority whose interest and concern it can engage as joint owners working for themselves and the experience of the partnership suggest that thirty per cent or more is enough to leaven the whole”.⁷ This statement suggested that the Partnership structures would be deemed successful if they could engage approximately a third of Partners. While not all Partners engaged with the opportunities provided by the JLP, it was argued that all expressed an acceptance of the ideologies as a condition of employment implicitly by remaining in the employ of the Partnership.⁸

2.2 The Founder and the founding principles of Partnership

John Spedan Lewis, founder of the John Lewis Partnership, documented the progress and growth of the JLP from Peter Jones, through its early years of expansion, until 1954 through his two books: *Partnership for All* and *Fairer Shares*.⁹ Both volumes document the origins and process of setting up the Partnership and then the practice of running it from the founder’s perspective. In addition to his books, John Spedan Lewis was a prolific writer, often contributing to newspaper columns and writing articles for the in-house magazine of the JLP, *The Gazette*, which he started in 1918.¹⁰

⁷ Sir Bernard Miller, ‘Foreword’ in Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 20.

⁸ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 23–24.

⁹ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*; John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*.

¹⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, pp. 401–2.

Spedan Lewis inherited the business from his father, John Lewis, upon his death in 1928.¹¹ The business consisted of two department stores: John Lewis in Oxford Street and Peter Jones in Sloane Square. John Lewis had begun trading from his own shop in Oxford Street in 1864, expanding into the seven adjacent units to form a department store.¹² He had a reputation for being “cantankerous”,¹³ with his management style described by union representative, P.C. Hoffman as “his Store was his domain; his word and will were law; he brooked no opposition from anyone, not even from those of his own household”.¹⁴ Spedan Lewis reflected in *Partnership for All* that the retail business was not his father’s “natural field” and that while John Lewis was profitable in capital, if he had invested further in staff, the business would have been “sounder and stronger”.¹⁵

Prior to John Lewis’s death, Spedan Lewis had tried to persuade his father that improved benefits, pay and profit sharing could improve efficiency and employee retainment. However, Spedan was only able to begin to experiment in these schemes when he gained the controlling interest of Peter Jones in 1914, first introducing a Committee for Communication, which aimed to bridge the gap between workers and principal management, and then distributing non-voting stock to staff.¹⁶ When introducing the Committees for Communication, Spedan believed them to be a unique feature, but learned later that other businesses had similar schemes in place where a member of a senior management would meet with representatives of shop-floor staff.¹⁷

¹¹ Cox, p. 76.

¹² Cox, pp. 6–7.

¹³ Lancaster, p. 147.

¹⁴ P.C. Hoffman, *They Also Serve* (Porcupine Press, 1949), p. 180.

¹⁵ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, pp. 12–17.

¹⁶ Bradley and Taylor, pp. 35–36.

¹⁷ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 34.

Spedan Lewis made similar claims about the Partnership structure, arguing that his experiment was not linked to any previous theorists or business models and that the “main lines of the plan were completed with no knowledge of that kind either from books or personal contacts”.¹⁸ He stated that his business acumen was sourced from his father’s skill in business but also John Lewis’s inability to realise its full potential, as well as qualities inherited from his mother, Eliza Baker, who had been educated at Girton College, which later became part of the University of Cambridge, in 1873.¹⁹ However, subsequent evaluations of the JLP have made links between Spedan’s Partnership and other social innovations, such as Robert Owen and his experiment at New Lanark which included a purpose-built village for mill workers as well as various welfare programs.²⁰ While Spedan mentioned New Lanark in his books, the link between Spedan’s work in establishing of educational benefits and the expanding of welfare have been explicitly linked to Owen’s innovations, suggesting a stronger link between the two experiments than initially acknowledged.²¹

Owen saw his experiment, once proven by scientific experimentation, as becoming a replacement for pre-existing forms of government and institutions,²² and his legacy was credited as the “catalyst for the emergence of Britain’s first socialist movement”.²³ Comparatively, Spedan initially claimed that his aim in creating the Partnership was to “solve the problems of one particular business”,²⁴ however, by the publication of his

¹⁸ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*. p. ix.

¹⁹ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 12; Cox, p. 11.

²⁰ Bradley and Taylor, p. 42.

²¹ Bradley and Taylor, p. 42..

²² Ophélie Siméon, *Robert Owen’s Experiment at New Lanark: From Paternalism to Socialism* (Springer, 2017), p. 2.

²³ Siméon, p. 142.

²⁴ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*. p. ix.

second book, *Fairer Shares*, in 1954, Spedan stated that the model was “A possible advance in civilisation and perhaps the only alternative to Communism”.²⁵ He argued that producer-cooperation could “invigorate” the British business world rather than continued investment in nationalisation which would cause “general paralysis”.²⁶

In 1929, Spedan Lewis founded the ‘John Lewis Partnership’, named after his father for his success in developing reputation for “solid service”, “good value” and “general trustworthiness”.²⁷ Spedan established three key aspirations for the new Partnership: the sharing of knowledge, the sharing of gain and the sharing of power.²⁸ Through these aspirations, he envisioned an organisation where “all of the workers, managers and managed alike, will be sharing fairly, that is to say as equally as is really possible, all the advantages of ownership”.²⁹ He argued that if these principles of sharing could be applied more broadly throughout society, that society itself would be healthier and happier. The representative democratic bodies across the different levels of the JLP aimed to devolve power from the centralised senior management team and formal hierarchies in branch.³⁰ These bodies also aided in the sharing of knowledge as details of the proceedings were dispersed through communication half-hours and featured in the national and local Partnership publications.³¹ Finally, gain was shared through fair remuneration, provisions for hardship, subsidised clubs and activities, family allowances,

²⁵ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*.

²⁶ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 87.

²⁷ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 15.

²⁸ Cox, p. 53. .

²⁹ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 25.

³⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, pp. 59–72.

³¹ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, pp. 44–58.

and most publicly through the annual bonus which was first distributed as share promises, then as negotiable stock before becoming a cash bonus.³²

By giving staff a share of the JLP which became a bonus tied to the profit of the business, Spedan provided an additional incentive for working toward the success of the Partnership.³³ Spedan had seen how the exclusion of staff from shared profits created resentment among the workforce in a strike at John Lewis Oxford Street following increased wartime profits after the First World War.³⁴ The incentive of profit-sharing fostered a better workplace environment but also encouraged loyalty in consumption, making staff more likely to spend their wages at the JLP which produced profits for the business and therefore themselves, rather than shopping with competitors.

The three aspirations were qualified by one dominant consideration: “the commercial success of the business and thus the strength and efficacy of the management should not be impaired”.³⁵ This safeguard ensured that management were able to make key decisions that would protect the future of the business without being inhibited by other members of the business. Spedan Lewis argued that “power to decide some matters requiring exceptional knowledge or judgement will always need to be concentrated in the least incompetent individuals available” but that where possible, a group would decide rather than an individual in effort to democratise power.³⁶ While this concentrated some of the decision-making power, decision-makers could be held to

³² John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, pp. 28–43; Jonathan Blatchford, ‘John Lewis & Partners Memory Store’, *The First Trust Settlement, 1929*, 2018
<https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/people/movers_and_shakers/the_founder/the_first_trust_settlement_1929> [accessed 12 November 2019].

³³ See Appendix 3 for details on the Partnership Bonus between 1964 and 2014.

³⁴ Bradley and Taylor, p. 37.

³⁵ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 23.

³⁶ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, pp. 62–63.

account by Partners through the democratic power-sharing bodies and through the Partnership journalism.

When Spedan introduced the first council and publication, *The Gazette*, discussions in contemporary politics were focused on universal suffrage.³⁷ In February 1918, the Representation of the People Act was given royal assent which widened franchise amongst the population of the United Kingdom.³⁸ Due to the impact of the First World War, arguments concerning suffrage were effectively won through the collective service and suffering of individuals as it was declared that “Citizenship could not be denied to those who given so much”.³⁹ The acknowledgement of sacrifice and service was also extended towards some women, giving women aged thirty and over the right to vote and to stand as parliamentary candidates.⁴⁰ Spedan was an advocate of democratic rights of citizens and sought to instil similar principles in his own business. He argued that “Democracy gives to every individual the greatest amount of his own way, the greatest freedom – consistent with the rights of others”.⁴¹

While not allowing all Partners a say in high-level decision making, Spedan did want Partners to have some autonomy over their working lives. Wherever reasonably possible, Spedan recommended that voting should be used in decision-making.⁴² He described Partners as being able to vote on issues such as “the place of a day’s outing

³⁷ Spedan Lewis introduced the first Staff Committee in Peter Jones in 1915 and then the first issue of *The Gazette* was published in 1918.

³⁸ Sir Hugh Fraser, *The Representation of the People Act, 1918 with Explanatory Notes* (Sweet and Maxwell, 1918). p. xxiv.

³⁹ Adrian Bingham, ‘The British Press and the 1918 Reform Act’, *Parliamentary History*, 37.1 (2018), pp. 150–67 (p. 157).

⁴⁰ Bingham, p. 158.

⁴¹ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 59.

⁴² John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, pp. 326–27.

or perhaps the times at which they day's work [...] shall stop and start".⁴³ Spedan determined that whether by democratic vote or through the means of holding decision-makers to account as previously discussed, the sovereign authority in the Partnership would be public opinion.⁴⁴ However, the built-in safeguard around management decisions displayed the paternalistic nature of the Partnership ideology, with Spedan's positioning of staff in the decision-making process likened to "children whose parents were provision for their adulthood".⁴⁵

The JLP has shown awareness of the paternalistic nature of its structure and role of the founder, contextualising it within their own history through the label of "constitutional monarchy" and in training materials for Partners.⁴⁶ A Partnership training film from 1960 captured this through a conversation about the founder between a newcomer to the Partnership and a senior Partner, whilst having drinks at the Odney Club, one of the Partnership-owned leisure clubs:

Senior Partner: 'One day he [Spedan Lewis] issued us all with bags of daffodil bulbs and told us to get busy'

Newcomer: 'He sounds a bit of an autocrat'

Senior Partner: 'Oh he was. Most revolutionaries have to be but still he got the volunteers he wanted to help build the Partnership and so the autocracy became a democracy'

Newcomer: 'But is it really very democratic yet, do you think?'

Senior Partner 2: 'Well the experiment is still developing'⁴⁷

The film moved on to show the newcomer and his increased interest in the Partnership history and organisation, as the voiceover tells the audience that "he could see that this

⁴³ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, pp. 326–27.

⁴⁴ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*. p. ix.

⁴⁵ Bradley and Taylor, p. 40.

⁴⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 'The John Lewis Partnership', *The Gazette (Jubilee Issue)*, 13 June 1964, p. 478.

⁴⁷ *Partnership Training Film*, dir. by Frank Work, 1960, The John Lewis Partnership Digital Archive.

Partnership with its shared labour, leisure and rewards, its free speaking councils, is indeed a new democracy in embryo but he realised that his generation must make an effort to help the Partnership grow up".⁴⁸ By 1960, Sir Bernard Miller had been chairman of the JLP for five years following the retirement of the founder, Spedan Lewis. The dialogue from the 1960 training film highlighted an important balance for the JLP, the need to preserve its founding principles and story but also the need to develop and move forward as the business continued to expand and develop as an experiment outside of its founder.

The founding principles, while preserved implicitly through training materials, were firmly entrenched in the founding documents: the first and second settlements in trust and the constitution. The constitution acted as a governing document for all members of the Partnership and guided the rules and regulations of the JLP, whereas the first and then second trust settlements protected the structure of the Partnership in law. In 1929, the first trust settlement transferred Spedan Lewis's shares to "three trustees, of whom he himself was one"⁴⁹ to distribute profit amongst the workers but allowing Spedan to retain some control in case he needed to end the experiment.⁵⁰ In 1940, Spedan determined that the business reached "maturity" in 1940 but due to the Second World War and complexities arising from Company Law, the second trust settlement was delayed.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Partnership Training Film*.

⁴⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 7.

⁵⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. ix.

⁵¹ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 324.

In 1950, Spedan Lewis signed the second trust settlement which transferred the share of the JLP to a trust, John Lewis Partnership Trust Limited.⁵² This *irrevocable* change created the company that became the head of the Partnership and that legally tied the responsibilities of the trustees to the constitution first drafted by Spedan Lewis.⁵³ While Spedan would not be able to reclaim the JLP following the second settlement, the ownership structure of the Partnership was not preserved indefinitely. The settlement period, retained from the first settlement agreement, was determined to last until “Twenty-one years from the death of the last survivor of the issue now living of his late Majesty King Edward VII”.⁵⁴ Following the death of Queen Elizabeth II in 2022, this stipulation suggests that the ownership structure of the JLP may be renegotiated in 2043.

The chairman, deputy chairman and three Partners elected by the Central Council were appointed as directors of the John Lewis Partnership Trust Limited and were also known as the trustees of the constitution.⁵⁵ The trustees ensured that the constitution of the JLP was upheld and that the democracy within the Partnership was run fairly. Their responsibilities included ensuring that elections were held by secret ballot, dividing up the constituencies of the JLP for annual elections for the Central Council and agreeing the Chairman’s choices for the roles with *ex officio* membership to the Central Council each year.⁵⁶

⁵² John Spedan Lewis, “Appendix II: The Second Irrevocable Settlement in Trust April 1950”, in *Fairer Shares* (Staples Press Limited, 1950), p. 218.

⁵³ John Spedan Lewis, “Appendix II: The Second Irrevocable Settlement in Trust April 1950”, pp. 218–21.

⁵⁴ John Spedan Lewis, ‘Appendix I: The First Irrevocable Settlement in Trust April 1929’, in *Fairer Shares* (Staples Press Limited, 1954), p. 205.

⁵⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 8.

⁵⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership April 1999 Draft’, *The Gazette*, 24 April 1999, pp. 8–9.

The constitution was based on the first and second trust settlements. While the trust settlements could only be amended in a court of law, the articles of the constitution could be updated or altered internally by the agreement of the chairman and two-thirds of the Central Council.⁵⁷ The first edition of the constitution was written by Spedan Lewis who intended to “leave a clear guideline for his successors” to ensure that his values and principles of Partnership would not be eroded.⁵⁸ The articles and rules and regulations, as outlined in the constitution, defined and governed membership to the JLP, granting Partners democratic rights akin to that of citizens in a democratic state. The structure of the Partnership was inspired by the United Kingdom’s parliamentary system and argued to be complicated by necessity. The Partners’ handbook of 1963 quoted Spedan Lewis stating:

“Human nature is very complicated. The constitutions of democratic communities have to be correspondingly complicated. The British Constitution itself is only dimly understood by most Britons and is utterly bewildering to most foreigners. Yet it has enabled this country to lead in the world in achievement of true democracy”.⁵⁹

Subsequent editions have featured amendments, and the language has been simplified over time, but the core of the constitution has remained. The largest alterations for the constitution occurred in 2009 during a period of financial crisis caused by recession.⁶⁰ This edition reiterated the values expressed in the original constitution in seven principles:

⁵⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 7.

⁵⁸ Eleanor O’Higgins, ‘The Ethos of Partnership: The John Lewis Partnership’, in *Progressive Business Models: Creating Sustainable and Pro-Social Enterprise*, ed. by E. O’Higgins and L. Zsolnai (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 197.

⁵⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Partners’ Handbook 7th Edition’, 1963, John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 221/4.

⁶⁰ O’Higgins, p. 201.

Purpose, Power, Profit, Members, Customers, Business, Relationships, and the Community.⁶¹

One of the purposes of the articles was to set the standards of the Partnership's behaviour toward a number of stakeholders, including the community, customers, suppliers, competitors and its own members.⁶² Additionally, the articles of the constitution outlined the chairman's responsibility to the Partnership and the safeguard, that if a chairman was deemed to fail in their duty, the council of the JLP had the power to remove them from post, so long as they obtained the support of three quarters of the council and the resolution remained in place for one month.⁶³ In the event that the Central Council voted to remove the chairman from office, the trustees of the constitution would have the responsibility to appoint the new chairman.⁶⁴

The maximum pay rate for any member of the Partnership was also dictated. The original constitution stated that the maximum pay rate was "the equivalent after taxation of five thousand pounds a year in 1900, or of twenty-five times the Partnership's concurrent minimum wage in London for a member with four dependent children, whichever of these two figures would be less".⁶⁵ Early in his career Spedan Lewis had determined that staff that were "properly-paid would have improved the results of the business" without detriment to his own family's standing of living.⁶⁶ This was evidenced in studies of the Partnership. In 1965, the weekly earnings of selling staff in the

⁶¹ O'Higgins, p. 201.

⁶² The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, pp. 13–20.

⁶³ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 8.

⁶⁴ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 65.

⁶⁵ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 30.

⁶⁶ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 44.

Partnership were at least seven per cent above the average for stores with one hundred or more employees, in both London and provincial towns.⁶⁷ Similarly, in 1987 the JLP were still found to be paying their sales assistants more per week on average than their competitors, however, Marks and Spencer (M&S) were offering competitive rates to the JLP for management trainees.⁶⁸

The means of limiting the maximum remuneration were altered in 2012, increasing to 75:1 compared to the “average basic pay of a non-management partner with three or more years’ service” however, the principle was retained.⁶⁹ By introducing the limitation on maximum earning, Spedan Lewis aimed to encourage fellowship and efficiency amongst Partners as well as ensuring that senior management could not raise their pay rate significantly without also increasing the pay rate of others.⁷⁰

In addition to the articles, the constitution also comprised of rules and regulations. The rules could be amended by the chairman and had the purpose of formally prescribing “the Partnership’s way of life”.⁷¹ The regulations referred to how the rules were put into practice and used in the day to day running of the Partnership. It was the rules of the constitution that set out the terms of profit-sharing in the JLP was defined as “any further remuneration given by the Partnership (such as Partnership Bonus, Minimum Income supplements, Children’s Allowances or other amenities” all of which were considered to be part of the ‘Partnership Benefit’ through the sharing of gain.⁷² All of the additional

⁶⁷ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 98. For men in Greater London over the age of 21 weekly earnings were 7 per cent over the average and 10 per cent for women.

⁶⁸ Bradley and Taylor, p. 153.

⁶⁹ Salaman and Storey, p. 18.

⁷⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 30.

⁷¹ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 9.

⁷² The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 33.

benefits through amenities or extra remuneration were in addition to the annual pay of Partners.⁷³ The Partnership Bonus, called Partnership Benefit until 1958, was the annual distribution of profits in the JLP to Partners.⁷⁴ The Bonus was proportionate to individual Partner's annual salary, as determined by the success of the business over the course of the previous financial year.⁷⁵ The JLP initially paid bonus using share promises, which were converted into preference shares, until 1970 when the bonus was first paid wholly in cash.⁷⁶ Once a Partner left the business, their shares were retained by the John Lewis Partnership Trust Limited.⁷⁷ The annual bonus contributed to Spedan Lewis's aim that Partners received the advantages of ownership.

While receiving the advantages of ownership, Partners were also expected to consider their responsibilities as co-owners, to ensure that the business could continue to provide for future Partners as well as those in current employment. The ownership structure has been criticised as a way of legitimising "an emphasis of profit above all else, and to stress that although decisions may not be in the best interest of individuals, they were in the interests of owners".⁷⁸ This was reflected in Partnership literature where the importance of being a 'co-owner' and the responsibilities that the role entailed were stressed: "Every member shall do his best for the Partnership as if it were in the ordinary sense his own business. He shall not attempt to get from it any more than he sincerely believes to be his fair and just dues".⁷⁹ However, this responsibility depended on

⁷³ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 45.

⁷⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Partners' Handbook 7th Edition', p. 38.

⁷⁵ See Appendix 3 for further details.

⁷⁶ MacPherson, p. 153; MacPherson, p. 195.

⁷⁷ O'Higgins, p. 198.

⁷⁸ Cathcart, 'Paradoxes of Participation: Non-Union Workplace Partnership in John Lewis', p. 774.

⁷⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 37.

membership to the Partnership, and not all of those associated with the JLP were considered to be Partners.

2.3 Boundaries of Partnership

In 1965, an advert for a secretarial position in John Lewis, Oxford Street, boasted the benefits of working for the company and the status of their employees, stating that: “All workers are partners and share all profits, with good holidays, sick pay, shopping discount, subsidised meals and non-contributory pensions scheme”.⁸⁰ While all workers were entitled to the title ‘Partner’, the full benefits of membership were not always extended to all who worked for the JLP. For example, in 1963, an amendment was added to the rules of the Partnership so that the chairman, with consent of the Central Council, could publish notice in *The Gazette* to suspend rules and regulations from branches or areas of the business for a period of up to three years.⁸¹

This amendment, referred to later as a suspension or exclusion under Rule 3, was then instigated by the chairman in relation to Partners working in the Paris Office of John Lewis Overseas Ltd. The chairman, Bernard Miller, stated this was because “it has never been practicable to apply all the detailed requirement of the Partnership’s Rules and Regulations to their work and the purpose of this exclusion is to give effect to the present arrangements”.⁸² John Lewis Overseas Ltd had been incorporated in 1946 to undertake buying opportunities abroad.⁸³ These units of the Partnership comprised of offices usually

⁸⁰ John Lewis & Co. Ltd, ‘Classified Advertising’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 January 1965, p. 22.

⁸¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Official Notices’, *The Gazette*, 5 October 1963, p. 895.

⁸² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Memorandum 10,303 Dated 27.12.63 from the Chairman to the Clerk to the Central Council’, *The Gazette*, 4 January 1964, p. 1204.

⁸³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Notes and News’, *The Gazette*, 20 July 1946.

staffed by a small number of Partners, for example the office in Paris employed three Partners.⁸⁴ While the Partners in this unit did receive Partnership bonus, the size and location of the unit meant that it was not “practicable for them to participate in all Partnership activities”, such as Branch Council or Committee for Communication.⁸⁵ However, the Partners in Paris were allocated to a constituency which allowed them to vote in the Central Council elections. The application of the amendment demonstrated that membership to the JLP was more complex than initially outlined.

An ‘employee’ was defined in the governing documents of the JLP as “any persons or person of either sex employed by the trading companies or any of them in regular service of any description at an hourly weekly monthly quarterly or yearly wage or salary with or without commission”.⁸⁶ The title of employee was then characterised as a ‘Partner’ within the constitution, stating that “A “Partner” means any person employed by a trading Company as defined in the 1929 Settlement (...) and includes the Chairman and Deputy Chairman or the Trust Company”.⁸⁷ The title of “Partner” was also extended within sub-clause (4) to “employees of any other Company or firm controlled by or directly or indirectly allied to or associated with the Central Board and which both the Central Board and Council declare to be within the Partnership”.⁸⁸ This definition incorporated the different units of the Partnership which included the department stores, supermarkets, service buildings, buying offices and manufacturing sites.

⁸⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Central Council Meeting: Summary of the Proceedings on Monday the 13th January’, *The Gazette*, 25 January 1964, p. 1292.

⁸⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Central Council Meeting: Summary of the Proceedings on Monday the 13th January’, pp. 1291–92.

⁸⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Appendix II: Text of the Settlement of April 1929’, in *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965* (John Lewis and Company Limited, 1965), p. 92.

⁸⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 19.

⁸⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 19.

The terms 'Partner' and 'Partnership' were first introduced to employees of Peter Jones in *The Gazette* in 1920.⁸⁹ As a Partner, there was an expectation that the articles of the constitution as well as the rules and regulations would be followed across the business with limited exceptions. These rules included behaviour towards other Partners, customers and competitors, business dress as well as outlining the roles and parameters of democratic institutions.⁹⁰ Benefits were also included in the rules such as training and education, pay and further remuneration and journalism within the Partnership.⁹¹

However, membership of the Partnership was more complex than suggested by the definition of 'Partner', as described within the first trust settlement, status as either a permanent or temporary employee impacted membership.⁹² Temporary tenure included short-term contracts such as staff hired for the busier Christmas period, but also students under the age of nineteen in full-time education who, because of their temporary status, did not receive benefits such as bonus, discount and were not referred to as Partners. In response to a readers' letter in 1988, the Chief Registrar, D A Stevens, explained that students and schoolchildren under the age of 19 in full-time education were regarded as temporary as they could not commit to the Partnership in anything but temporary service.⁹³ Stevens continued to state that "Under the original Partnership Trusts temporary employees are not eligible for Partnership Bonus, which may be distributed

⁸⁹ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 43.

⁹⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*.

⁹¹ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*.

⁹² The John Lewis Partnership, 'Appendix II: Text of the Settlement of April 1929', pp. 92–93.

⁹³ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Response by D.A. Stevens to "Saturday Workers" by An Under-Appreciated Partner', *The Gazette*, 13 August 1988, section Readers' Letters, p. 658.

only among Partners”, separating temporary *employees* from permanent *Partners* and therefore not sharing in all of the benefits of full membership.⁹⁴

Membership to the JLP could depend on the negotiations involved in acquisition and the financial risk presented by the purchase which could be minimised by limiting membership. In October 1937, the Partnership purchased ten Waitrose shops from Wallace Waite.⁹⁵ Waite had started the business in 1908 but when none of his sons wanted to take over the business, he began looking for someone to take over who he could trust with his business. The one-hundred and sixty-four employees of Waitrose were immediately made Partners, with full entitlements which included “three weeks’ holiday a year, an annual issue of shares in Partnership Bonus [and] the right to vote”.⁹⁶ Comparatively, when Spedan acquired the fifteen branches of Selfridges’ Suburban and Provincial Stores (SPS) in 1940, their employees had to wait until their branch became profitable before becoming instated as Partners.⁹⁷ The implication was made that if they did not become profitable, the branch would be sold rather than become part of the Partnership. The difference in treatment of the SPS employees to those who worked for Waitrose highlights an important point about citizenship within the Partnership. The employees of SPS were expected to earn their ‘citizenship’ in the Partnership whereas the Waitrose employees were awarded their status upon their takeover.

Similarly, the size or nature of a Partnership office or branch could also impact membership. The amendment applied to the Paris buying office that excluded Partners

⁹⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Response by D.A. Stevens to “Saturday Workers” by An Under-Appreciated Partner’, p. 658.

⁹⁵ Cox, p. 103.

⁹⁶ Cox, p. 103.

⁹⁷ Cox, p. 118.

in the office from certain rules and regulations was similarly applied to Stead McAlpin, Herbert Parkinson and Borval Fabrics, which were all manufacturing sites acquired by the JLP.⁹⁸ When Stead McAlpin & Co Ltd. was acquired in 1965, chairman, Bernard Miller stated that “as in other similar cases, the Company will not immediately be brought fully within the Partnership system. It is expected that it will take about two years for the new relationship to be established and consolidated, after which Steads will become fully part of the Partnership”.⁹⁹

Upon acquisition, special arrangements were made and strategically reviewed for their membership to the Partnership. In the case of Borval Fabrics and Herbert Parkinson, the arrival of these units into the JLP was kept secret from the majority of Partners, but the Central Council was informed.¹⁰⁰ Within *The Gazette*, a statement was published that stated “two Branches which have been associated with the Partnership for some time but which have not previously been constituent companies under the Trust Settlements should be brought within the Partnership”.¹⁰¹ The Central Council approved this move and the exclusion under Rule 3 of certain Partnership rules and regulations for a period of three years.

Borval Fabrics had been a project of the founder which had been started in 1952, twelve years before its formal integration into the Partnership in 1964.¹⁰² Spedan Lewis had invited Mr J J Valner to start “a woollen manufacturing business” within the

⁹⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Application of Partnership Rules and Regulations to Stead McAlpin, Herbert Parkinson and Borval’, *The Gazette*, 3 January 1970, p. 1256.

⁹⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Stead McAlpin & Co Ltd’, *The Gazette*, 25 December 1965, p. 1155.

¹⁰⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Exclusions under Rule 3’, *The Gazette*, 4 January 1964, p. 1203.

¹⁰¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Exclusions under Rule 3’, p. 1203.

¹⁰² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Experts in Wool’, *The Gazette*, 1 February 1975, p. 4.

Partnership.¹⁰³ Similarly, Herbert Parkinson, a textile factory in Darwin, Northwest Lancashire, was acquired by the JLP in 1953 and its acquisition was unannounced within the business until 1965.¹⁰⁴ It was first mentioned publicly in the announcement in *The Gazette* of the successful purchase of Stead McAlpin, stating that Herbert Parkinson had “joined the Partnership group of Companies some years ago” and explaining the location and number of employees of the business alongside the new purchased Steads.¹⁰⁵ When queried by “Two Anxious Partners” in the Readers’ Letters in March 1966 who asked “will someone put us out of our agony of curiosity and tell us, Who or What is Herbert Parkinson?”, they were simply referred to the Chairman’s announcement of the purchase of Stead McAlpin on 25th December 1965 by the editor.¹⁰⁶ This highlighted the tensions in the Partnership between the sharing of knowledge and the safeguarding of business decisions, limiting the flow of information to representative Partners, rather than the collective and challenging how membership to the Partnership was presented.

2.4 The Principal Authorities

The principal authorities of the JLP were responsible for all high-level and strategic decisions, including determining membership. The authorities included the chairman, the Central Board, and the Central Council, who were assisted by both the ‘critical’ and

¹⁰³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Experts in Wool’, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Jonathan Blatchford, ‘John Lewis & Partners Memory Store’, *The Early Years of Herbert Parkinson*, 2018

<<https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/head_office_and_distribution/manufacturing/herbert_parkinson/the_early_years_of_herbert_parkinson>> [accessed 11 June 2022].

¹⁰⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Stead McAlpin & Co Ltd’, p. 1155.

¹⁰⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Two Anxious Partners’, *The Gazette*, 5 March 1966, section Readers’ Letters, pp. 119–20.

'executive' sides of the Partnership.¹⁰⁷ The 'critical' side of the business consisted of "the general inspector, the chief registrar, the internal auditor, the financial advisor [and] the Partners' counsellor"¹⁰⁸ and Spedan Lewis described their purpose as those "who watch the doing and play the part of the bystander who is proverbially apt to see most of the game".¹⁰⁹ The 'executive' side, Spedan Lewis argued, "will comprise almost the whole of the Partnership" and were responsible for the overall running of the business,¹¹⁰ overseen by "the director of maintenance and expansion, the director of financial operations [and] the two directors of personnel".¹¹¹ This framework of management was first outlined in the *Partnership for All*,¹¹² defining each of the various roles and then later simplified in *Fairer Shares* to demonstrate the structure of the JLP, with "The Partnership's public opinion" retained as the "sovereign authority" of the Partnership.¹¹³

Between 1964 and 2014, the JLP had four different chairmen: Bernard Miller (1955-1972), Peter Lewis (1972-1993), Stuart Hampson (1993-2007) and Charlie Mayfield (2007-2020).¹¹⁴ All of the chairmen were required to report to the Central Council, and later the Partnership Council, on "commercial and partner matters" and respond to the questions put to them by councillors.¹¹⁵ These were reported on in *The Gazette*, making interactions between councillors and the chairman accessible to all

¹⁰⁷ See Appendix 2.

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix 2.

¹⁰⁹ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 425.

¹¹⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 439.

¹¹¹ See Appendix 2.

¹¹² See Appendix 1.

¹¹³ See Appendix 2.

¹¹⁴ Jonathan Blatchford and Imogen Hunt, 'John Lewis & Partners Memory Store', *Subsequent Chairmen of the John Lewis Partnership*, 2020

<https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/category/people/movers_and_shakers/chairmen_of_the_john_lewis_partnership> [accessed 13 August 2021].

¹¹⁵ Salaman and Storey, p. 42.

Partners. Chairmen were also required to answer letters addressed to them in the letters' section of *The Gazette*, which gave Partners the opportunity to communicate directly with the chairman.

The chairman was ultimately responsible for the running of the Partnership and was described by Spedan Lewis as a position of "great trust, as is that of every captain of a ship".¹¹⁶ The role of chairman was full-time and an individual could hold the post up until the age of seventy-five years in the constitution, until 2007 when the Partnership introduced an amendment to the rule stating that appointments were for the maximum of ten years.¹¹⁷ The chairman of the JLP held all the shares with voting rights, while the JLP Trust Limited held the deferred ordinary shares for Partners' benefit, which meant that the chairman retained majority control over the Partnership and appointed the managing directors to run the different sections of the business.¹¹⁸ While the chairman retained authority, they were held accountable for decision-making across the business through the democratic structures.

The constitution of the JLP in 1965 described the Central Council as a representative body where "all the Partners as a whole may make enquiry, hold discussions, exercise powers and communicate with their Principal Management and the Principal Management with their Partners".¹¹⁹ It was initially formed as a Staff Council in Peter Jones, but expanded as the JLP grew through acquisitions.¹²⁰ The council met a minimum of four times a year and councillors were elected by Partners within their

¹¹⁶ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, pp. 95–97.

¹¹⁷ Salaman and Storey, p. 41.

¹¹⁸ Salaman and Storey, p. 41.

¹¹⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 44.

¹²⁰ Peter Jones, *The Gazette*, 20 September 1919, p. 376.

constituency to represent their interests.¹²¹ In the council year 1964-5, there were one-hundred and thirty-eight councillors of which one-hundred and eleven were elected and the remaining twenty-seven were nominated because of their role within the business.¹²² Within the constitution, limits were placed on the ratio of unelected or *ex officio* members of the council to elected members so that for every unelected member, there would be at least two elected members to encourage democracy within the business.¹²³

The Central Council had a series of committees that managed specific issues including: Ways and Means, General Purposes, Pay and Allowances, Unassured Pensions, Petitions, Clubs and Societies, and Claims.¹²⁴ Additional committees and steering groups were created as needed, such for the review of the constitution that took place in 1999 with suggested amendments then put forward for the central council to vote on.¹²⁵ Within the constitution, the Central Council and its committees were granted “funds equivalent to at least one percent of the of the pay and Partnership Bonus received by partners for the previous trading year”.¹²⁶ These funds were to cover amenities as well as any purpose that the council saw fit, however the chairman had the ability to veto any spend deemed inappropriate for the reputation of the business.¹²⁷

One of the key responsibilities of the Central Council was holding members of management, up to and including the chairman, to account. The council were permitted

¹²¹ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 46.

¹²² Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 60.

¹²³ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 46.

¹²⁴ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 60.

¹²⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Reviewing the Constitution’, *The Gazette*, 16 January 1999, pp. 1276–77.

¹²⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership April 1999 Draft’, p. 10. Prior to revisions in 1999, the cost of ‘free insurance’ was deducted from the Council’s funds.

¹²⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership April 1999 Draft’, p. 10.

to “discuss any matter whatsoever and make any suggestion that they shall see fit to the central board or to the chairman” and to receive a response from the board and the chairman, with the stipulation that “their judgements shall be expedient for the Partnership”.¹²⁸ As the ultimate consequence for breach of terms, the Central Council had the power to remove the chairman from office, if they were deemed to be in breach of the constitution or failed to pay dividends.¹²⁹ Further responsibilities of the Central Council included the nomination of councillors to become trustees and the election of Partners to the board.¹³⁰

The council system mirrored the working procedures of the British Parliamentary system, with the Central Council as the House of Commons and the subsequent branch-based councils serving a similar function to local borough councils. Individuals, both internal and external to the JLP, have often understood the Partnership’s system of committees and councils in these terms.¹³¹ Partners across every level of the business were able to stand for election to the councils, however a frequent criticism of this element of the democratic system was that the number of managers occupying elected seats often outnumbered that of non-management Partners.¹³² Flanders et al.’s evaluation of the democratic structure in 1968 found that elected managerial councillors outnumbered elected non-management councillors significantly, for example, for the council year 1964-5, there were eighty-five managerial councillors elected compared to twenty-six non-

¹²⁸ Sir Bernard Miller, ‘Foreword’ in Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 17.

¹²⁹ Bradley and Taylor, p. 50.

¹³⁰ Bradley and Taylor, p. 49.

¹³¹ Examples include Sir Bernard Miller, ‘Foreword’ in Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 19–20; Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 55. T Keith, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2020, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

¹³² Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 60.

management.¹³³ The chairman, Bernard Miller, responded to criticism in the foreword of the published research that “this of course corresponds to electoral behaviour in political behaviour – Members of Parliament are broadly an elite of merit, and not typical examples of the electorate” which encourages further questioning of how representative were the democratic institutions of the Partnership.¹³⁴

Similarities between the Partnership structure and the parliamentary structure were also highlighted in interviews where retired Partners described their experiences acting as councillors. One interviewee described the formalities of Central Council in similar terms to that of the House of Commons:

“Again, it has to be quite formal because the...you’ve got an agenda and you’ve got to get through it so you can’t let people waffle on for too long about things, if they’ve made their point – you need to control that. The democracy was run very much along parliamentary lines [...] Is it Erskine May – the Bible of parliamentary rules and regs? [...] so, it was modelled on parliamentary procedures in order to get the business done so it had to be quite formal but in a nice way.”¹³⁵

Another commented on how they saw their role as a councillor: “you’ve got to remember all the time, it’s a bit like being in parliament – you’re a representative, not a delegate”.¹³⁶ Councillors saw their role in terms of being a member of parliament which shaped their experience and engagement with the democracy, as envisioned by Spedan Lewis. These also provided all Partners with a route to hold decision-makers accountable or their

¹³³ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 60.

¹³⁴ Sir Bernard Miller, ‘Foreword’ in Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 19.

¹³⁵ T Keith.

¹³⁶ Interview closed to public (1), *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2020, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

representative, if it was felt that their views were not being put across fairly. One interviewee described their role as a central councillor as:

“Well you felt a responsibility because what was good about it was you had the opportunity to speak, right, in front of people from all over the Partnership came so right from, you met people from other branches, from Scotland, right the way down to the South and it was yes, it was good. From my point of view, I never felt intimidated or anything, you spoke your mind, you said what you had to say. The good thing was you heard other people’s opinions so you might have gone there with a set mind but then if you listened all round you might’ve voted in a different way but then you had to go back to your constituents and say ‘well I’m sorry I didn’t vote the way you asked me to’ because we weren’t delegates, what’s the word, I can’t think of the word [...] so a representative you might say ‘this is how we feel’, ‘right I’ll go to central council and say what I have to say’ but you had to listen to opinion and then decide and maybe you didn’t decide so had to go back because you were a representative like an MP is, you then voted the way you wanted”¹³⁷

As demonstrated, the responsibility felt by councillors was to represent their constituents or, if convinced of arguments at council, try to appeal to their constituents. If a Central Councillor was unsuccessful in their explanation to constituents, then they risked not being re-elected in the annual elections.¹³⁸

Where the Central Council was identified as comparable to the House of Commons, the Central Board was compared to the House of Lords with Spedan Lewis describing their relationship and responsibilities as having “separate responsibilities and powers, just as have the separate Houses of the British Parliament and those of the American Congress, they really form [...] a single whole”.¹³⁹ However, the board has also been likened to the Cabinet government by ensuring that there was a majority of members

¹³⁷ J Hutton, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”’: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2020, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

¹³⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Partners’ Handbook 7th Edition’.

¹³⁹ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 92.

on the board that were “likely to be predisposed to the Chairman’s point of view”.¹⁴⁰ The board consisted of the chairman, deputy chairman, five critical directors which included the chief registrar, Partner’s counsellor, financial advisor, internal auditor, and general inspector, in addition to five elected councillors.¹⁴¹ Elected councillors were appointed as directors of the board for the first time in 1946.¹⁴² The Central Council voted to elect the five councillors, but any Partner could stand for election, however in 1946, only members of management were elected as they were the most well-known amongst the voters.¹⁴³

The Central Board was the final of the three principal authorities of the Partnership. The Board were responsible for the “overall management and performance of the Partnership” and additionally, had the power to assess risk and make appropriate judgements on divisional business plans.¹⁴⁴ The Central Board’s main responsibility was to control the budget for the Partnership and decide how the revenue of the JLP should be divided and used.¹⁴⁵ The profits of the Partnership were split between the ongoing needs of the business to ensure its future, pensions of Partners and the Partnership Bonus. The split could be contentious, highlighting tensions between decision-makers who decided how much to invest in the business, compared to how much to reward Partners.¹⁴⁶ While the Partnership Bonus was protected by the constitution, so was the executive manager’s right to invest in the future of the business which demonstrated some of the competing pressures of co-ownership.

¹⁴⁰ Bradley and Taylor, p. 48.

¹⁴¹ Cox, p. 137.

¹⁴² MacPherson, p. 180.

¹⁴³ Cox, pp. 136–37.

¹⁴⁴ Salaman and Storey, p. 42.

¹⁴⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 16.

¹⁴⁶ Salaman and Storey, p. 178.

2.5 Democracy in branch

As well as the central institutions for democracy there were also opportunities for Partners to be involved at branch level through the Committee for Communication and Branch Council. The Committee for Communication was the oldest representative institutions in the Partnership which was introduced when Spedan Lewis took over the management of Peter Jones.¹⁴⁷ He had previously trialled the committee with some success at John Lewis Oxford Street and aimed to open a direct line of communication between the shop assistants and himself.¹⁴⁸ Representatives on the Committee for Communications in branch consisted of a maximum of eighteen elected non-management partners and a chairman, who was appointed.¹⁴⁹ The committees met between four and six times a year and covered topics such as working environment, improved efficiency and conditions in the branch.¹⁵⁰

The original Committee for Communication was chaired by Spedan Lewis, but the role was later deputised to the Partners' Counsellor, or a full-time individual from the Partners' Counsellors' office, as the business expanded.¹⁵¹ The office of the Partners' Counsellor sat on the critical side of the business, working alongside the registry to open lines of communication between Partners in-branch and senior management, both in branch and centrally.¹⁵² The role of the Partners' Counsellor was described in the 1963 Partners' Handbook as the "head of a small department established to see that all his

¹⁴⁷ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 34.

¹⁴⁸ Cox, p. 53.

¹⁴⁹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 50.

¹⁵⁰ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 51–53.

¹⁵¹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 51.

¹⁵² Bernard Paraque and Hugh Willmott, 'Cooperatives—Saviours or Gravediggers of Capitalism? Critical Performativity and the John Lewis Partnership', *Organization*, 21.5 (2014), pp. 604–25 (p. 610).

staff were comfortable, happy and no grievances. The Partners' Counsellor is constantly available to any partner who wants advice and cannot or does not wish to get it from anyone else".¹⁵³ The role required the Partners' Counsellor to act as an ombudsman across the JLP. Partners could go to the Partner's Counsellor with any grievance, and it would be reported directly to the chairman providing an alternative line of communication that Partners could use to raise issues, in addition to the Committee for Communication.¹⁵⁴

The Committees for Communication across the Partnership provided a direct line for grass-roots issues in branch from non-management Partners to reach senior management. Flanders et al. described the work of the committees as "essentially grievance-settling bodies" and the attitude survey conducted as part of the research in *Experiment for Industrial Democracy*, identified the Committees for Communication as bodies that "exist to 'get things done'".¹⁵⁵ Issues were raised by constituents and then presented by the elected representative to obtain a response from the appropriate member of the management team. Minutes of the meeting and were recorded for the head of branch and were published, alongside the responses from the relevant member of management, in the local edition of the *Chronicle*.¹⁵⁶ The contributions of the elected representatives were anonymised in the minutes to safeguard against victimisation by colleagues in branch.

¹⁵³ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Partners' Handbook 7th Edition', p. 23.

¹⁵⁴ Cox, p. 292.

¹⁵⁵ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 51–52.

¹⁵⁶ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 51.

The Committees for Communication were recognised as an effective way as handling grievances in branch, as demonstrated by the unusual case of chairman, Bernard Miller, using the format of a committee for communication in 1968 to deal with a conflict in Waitrose.¹⁵⁷ A series of complaints had been made about Stanley Carter, the managing director of Waitrose, so Miller called a meeting in the style of a Committee for Communication with twenty-three branch managers in London.¹⁵⁸ Miller circulated points made by the committee to the senior management team, effectively diffusing the situation through the format of the Committee for Communication.

As the Partnership expanded, so did the democratic structures. Following the acquisition of SPS, the first “house council” was held in Cole Brothers, Sheffield in 1940 which soon became branch councils, one form of branch democracy.¹⁵⁹ Branch councils were described in the Partners’ Handbook of 1963 as being “the heart and centre of Partnership democracy” in branch.¹⁶⁰ Each council consisted of between eleven to fifty-five elected members, dependent on the size of the branch, and typically four unelected or *ex officio* members of the branch: the managing director, general manager, accountant and registrar.¹⁶¹ The branch was split into constituencies that comprised of adjacent departments in branch and representatives were elected in each constituency by secret ballot. All permanent Partners that were entitled to a vote were able to stand for election in their branch.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ Cox, pp. 176–77.

¹⁵⁸ Cox, pp. 176–77.

¹⁵⁹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 69.

¹⁶⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Partners’ Handbook 7th Edition’, p. 20.

¹⁶¹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 70.

¹⁶² Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 70.

Branch Councils were held in individual John Lewis department stores or across constituencies for smaller branches which also included the leisure properties and service buildings. Waitrose, which was acquired by the JLP in 1937, in 1940 had its own Branch Council that covered all nine branches.¹⁶³ The Waitrose Branch Council originally consisted of sixteen representatives from nine shops as well as the representatives from the general managers and head office in addition to the required *ex officio* members.¹⁶⁴ The Waitrose Branch Council was retained as a singular representative body for the grocery side of the business which grew as the business expanded, becoming increasingly important to the JLP's business model.¹⁶⁵ In 1968, there were only twenty-seven branches of Waitrose¹⁶⁶ compared to 2013, when the grocery division had expanded to two-hundred and eighty-eight branches.¹⁶⁷

The main role of Branch Councils was to manage local issues which included trading hours and local expenditure, as distributed by the Central Council, on amenities and gifts which were managed through committees. Each Branch Council was set up with a committee for claims which aimed to provide for Partners in branch who required financial support.¹⁶⁸ Most Branch Councils also had a dining-room committee, which needed to include a representative from the branch Committee for Communication, and a social committee.¹⁶⁹ The meetings were held between six and eight times a year and

¹⁶³ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Constituencies for the House Councils', *The Gazette*, 6 July 1940, p. 469.

¹⁶⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Constituencies for the House Councils', p. 469.

¹⁶⁵ As demonstrated in Salaman and Storey, pp. 84–86. Showing Waitrose's sales performance gaining on that of the John Lewis Department Stores between 1999 and 2004

¹⁶⁶ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 78.

¹⁶⁷ Cathcart, 'Directing Democracy: Competing Interests and Contested Terrain in the John Lewis Partnership', p. 605.

¹⁶⁸ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 70.

¹⁶⁹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 70.

also allowed for branch councillors to sponsor resolutions to be raised at the Central Council, which brought together elected representatives from across the Partnership. They were also open to observation from the stranger's gallery for any branch Partners to observe the democracy in action and ensure that their views as constituents were being fairly represented.¹⁷⁰ The minutes of the meetings were also published in the branch's edition of the *Chronicle*, using the journalism as a mechanism to share knowledge but also a route to hold councillors to account by ensuring the transparency of democratic processes.

Branch councillors could be Partners of any rank in branch. The management hierarchy in branches of the John Lewis Department Stores was split between the selling-side and the non-selling side. On the non-selling side, workrooms were supervised by foremen, who did not have the same rank as a department manager and reported to the workrooms manager and the managing director of the branch.¹⁷¹ Comparatively, management on the selling-side of the business consisted of department managers, a general manager, and a managing director. Department managers were responsible for between twenty to eighty partners, depending on the size of the department and the branch.¹⁷² Department managers were able to stand for election to the Branch Council, whereas the general manager and the managing director of the branch automatically held a position on the council as *ex officio* members.

In larger departments or branches, there were also section managers who reported to the department manager and were delegated the running of select counters or

¹⁷⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Partners' Handbook 7th Edition', p. 20.

¹⁷¹ Cox, p. 307.

¹⁷² Cox, p. 307.

sections.¹⁷³ In smaller stores, this role was attributed to a senior selling assistant who received a “cash bonus for the additional responsibility” of running the department, on occasions where the department manager was away.¹⁷⁴ The hierarchy in branch was described as being “very formal” and similar to that of a strict family:

“[...] it was Mr... and I remember as a junior you didn’t really talk to your manager, so I had a sponsor on the department and if I had a question about that then my sponsor, Jackie, I remember her very well she would say well ask the section manager, but the section manager was a woman called Mrs Bridgeman, and the sponsor would always say ‘oh go and ask mother’ and I wouldn’t really kind of get that and you would hear the section manager say ‘Well, oh I better ask father about that’ and she meant the department manager and I thought that was a bit odd, but then I realised and I don’t know about the rest of the Partnership, but certainly there [Tyrell & Green], it was quite normal for management of the departments to be known as father and mother.”¹⁷⁵

The hierarchical nature of management was also identifiable in the dining arrangements in branch as in some branches management had a separate dining room. Some Partners argued through the readers’ letters section of *The Gazette* that management were “discriminating between rank and file Partners and management” which encouraged a “harmful ‘them’ and ‘us’ attitude”.¹⁷⁶ The Director of Personnel, T G Andrews countered these claims stating that there was not the space in every branch for a combined dining room and that it was beneficial for management to meet “in an informal atmosphere for part of each day”.¹⁷⁷

The term ‘rank and file’, that was often used to describe non-management Partners, was also a point of contention for some. The term had originated in the military

¹⁷³ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 87.

¹⁷⁴ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 87.

¹⁷⁵ T Keith.

¹⁷⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Schroeder’, 11 December 1971, section Readers’ letters.

¹⁷⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Response by T G Andrews to “Segregation in Dining-Rooms” by Unsigned’, *The Gazette*, 25 December 1971, section Readers’ letters, p. 1237.

to describe “who were unqualified and untrained”¹⁷⁸ and been used since the beginning of the JLP to describe Partners who had “little or no authority over others”.¹⁷⁹ The term was disputed in 1968, however no replacement gained enough support to remove ‘rank and file’ from Partnership terminology. Partners argued that as they were neither unqualified nor untrained that the term should be replaced with something more suitable.¹⁸⁰ Following complaints from Partners, the Chief Registrar proposed the term “Staff Partner” in 1990. He argued that a distinction between management and non-management Partners was necessary and that the new term had “the advantages of being simple, short, unlikely to offend any but the most sensitive of people”.¹⁸¹

There were opportunities for Partners to become engaged in democracy at each level of the business, from the grassroot Committees for Communication to the Central Board. However, the JLP faced challenges balancing the democratic ideals of power-sharing with the traditional management hierarchy prevalent in the majority of retail businesses in the twentieth century. As a Partnership, this prompted questions related to equality between the managed and management framed in terms of co-ownership.

2.6 Journalism

Spedan Lewis declared that the ‘sovereign authority’ of the Partnership was the public opinion within the Partnership.¹⁸² He stated that the “soundness” of the public opinion would depend on the sharing of “proper information” as well as the “personal

¹⁷⁸ John Grapper, “‘Staff Partners’ Titles to End John Lewis Rank and File Unrest’, *Financial Times*, 26 June 1990.

¹⁷⁹ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 34.

¹⁸⁰ Grapper.

¹⁸¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Rank and File - a Proposed Alternative’, *The Gazette*, 23 June 1990.

¹⁸² John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 210.

quality” of individuals to keep members informed.¹⁸³ Information was shared through the various councils and committees but also through journalism at a local and national level. In-house magazines and publications were not new or unusual in British businesses in the twentieth century and were often used to communicate information amongst employees.¹⁸⁴ However, these publications had additional weight in the context of a co-owned business as they were used as part of the democratic structure to further the sharing of knowledge and therefore power through the ability to hold decision-makers to account.

Journalism was introduced in Peter Jones in 1918 when he published the first issue of *The Gazette* as an occasional newsletter.¹⁸⁵ The purpose, as stated on the cover, was “for the publication of facts, opinions and ideas of interest to any one whose fortunes are for the time connected in some degree with those of the company”.¹⁸⁶ The publication initially shared notices from management, minutes from staff committees, short editorials, recipes and competitions.¹⁸⁷ In addition to introducing a new method of disseminating knowledge across departments in Peter Jones, Spedan Lewis wanted to “start a genuine two-way debate” with his staff and encouraged them to write in letters that he would respond to about any grievances, suggestions, criticisms or customs.¹⁸⁸ The publication was initially unpopular so Spedan Lewis started controversy in the letters pages “by proposing that everyone’s pay rates should be published” which galvanised some replies

¹⁸³ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, pp. 210–11.

¹⁸⁴ Heller and Rowlinson, ‘The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets’, p. 1002.

¹⁸⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Gazette*, 16 March 1918, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 16 March 1918, p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ Peter Jones, *The Gazette*, pp. 1–206 V1:1-14.

¹⁸⁸ Cox, p. 54.

from staff who strongly opposed the idea.¹⁸⁹ In his term as chairman, Spedan authored many articles that he thought may be contentious but argued that:

“The publication of things, that make disagreeable reading and that may cause bad feeling, is hardly less desirable than the publication of things of the contrary kind. Genuine frankness and nothing else will win confidence”.¹⁹⁰

The candour in both the weekly publication and Spedan Lewis’s writings about the JLP aimed to encourage openness and allow for suggestions to be raised within the Partnership, even if that led to competition or criticism. Despite its initial unpopularity, the printing of the newsletter over time became weekly and the tradition of the letter pages continued and the responsibility of replying continued to fall to the chairman or the responsible member of senior management.

As the Partnership expanded, the *Chronicle* newsletter was introduced to individual larger stores in 1947 to report on local issues alongside *The Gazette* that reported on national issues.¹⁹¹ These were produced in the larger of the John Lewis branches and the editors were often the branch registrars.¹⁹² Heller and Rowlinson argued that between 1945 and 1960, the house magazine functioned as a way “to re-establish bonds” in expanding organisations that would preserve a sense of belonging in employees and continue to be “viewed as part of a broader system of industrial welfare”.¹⁹³ National issues were still reported on in *The Gazette* and in 1949, the

¹⁸⁹ Cox, pp. 54–55.

¹⁹⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 422.

¹⁹¹ MacPherson, p. 180.

¹⁹² Salaman and Storey, p. 47.

¹⁹³ Heller and Rowlinson, ‘The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets’, p. 1010.

Waitrose *Chronicle* began as the publication to address issues specific to the grocery business.¹⁹⁴

Communication was key within the Partnership principles and used to deal with grievances and complaints from Partners that were often submitted in the form of letters to the editor of the *Gazette* or *Chronicle*. The letters' pages provided an important line of communication between Partners and senior management as part of the democratic structure that offered the opportunity to hold decision-makers accountable. The management were obligated to answer the letters addressed to them through the *Gazette* or *Chronicles* and could be held accountable for any decisions made, which made these pages popular amongst readers.¹⁹⁵ The Readers' Letters pages were an important feature of the JLP in-house publications, although not unique. The BBC's house magazine, *Ariel*, also included a letters page that published letters that were "highly critical of management" which was seen to create "trust, engagement and transparency at the BBC".¹⁹⁶ The letters' pages became increasingly important in the 1960s and 1970s when strike action increased as trade union militancy rose.¹⁹⁷ Communication channels in business were recognised to need to be two-ways allowing the managed to speak to the managers, as well as vice versa.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ MacPherson, p. 180.

¹⁹⁵ Heller and Rowlinson, 'The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets', p. 1007.

¹⁹⁶ Heller and Rowlinson, 'The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets', p. 1021.

¹⁹⁷ Heller and Rowlinson, 'The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets', pp. 1011–12.

¹⁹⁸ Heller and Rowlinson, 'The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets', p. 1012..

There were occasions where readers' letters were either not published or where the editor decided to not request a response from management. In many of these cases, the editor would print a justification of why a letter had not been published to notify the author.¹⁹⁹ For any letters that were not published within twenty-one days, the authors could send the letter to the Trustees of the Constitution who were able to recommend letters for publication via the chairman.²⁰⁰ If the General Editor of *The Gazette* wished to withhold a letter from publication, they had to recommend that course of action to the Chairman. Reasons for letters to be withheld included defamation, security reasons, introduction of politics or if they were deemed to be malicious.²⁰¹ A debate on malicious letter writing in 1988 showed that, between 1981 and 1988, only 61 letters had been withheld from publication in *The Gazette* compared to the 4191 published.²⁰²

Answering readers' letters was prioritised among senior management, irrelevant of their workload, giving a voice to Partners at all levels of the business.²⁰³ Flanders et al. reported that "there was a recognition of the fact that public discussion of the way in which managers manage is a price that must be paid for the unequal distribution of power and pay" in the JLP.²⁰⁴ This reflected the idea that the sovereign authority in the Partnership was the opinion of the public. In practice, answers published in the *Gazette* did not always please or appease the letter writer and the correspondence could continue throughout

¹⁹⁹ For an example see The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Publish and Be Damned', *The Gazette*, 8 March 1980, section Readers' Letters, p. 141.

²⁰⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 43.

²⁰¹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Summary of Proceedings on Monday 6 February', *The Gazette*, 18 February 1989, p. 68.

²⁰² The John Lewis Partnership, 'Summary of Proceedings on Monday 6 February', p. 68.

²⁰³ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 143.

²⁰⁴ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 144.

several issues. However, one interviewee raised the point that by writing a letter into the *Gazette*, senior management could be made aware of an issue:

“What I always felt was that people reply in a very diplomatic, politically correct answer, but quite often you’d find that a few months down the line the thing changed that you wrote about. So, they’re not going to say “Oh yes, we agree with you. We’ll go and change it right away” but by raising it, you’ve put it on someone’s radar, if you like.”²⁰⁵

The letters’ section in both the *Gazette* and *Chronicles* served as a method for managing industrial relations, serving as an outlet for Partners and was a key means of holding management to account within the JLP.

A survey carried out by the *Gazette* in 1958 showed that the letters section was the most read.²⁰⁶ This was similarly reported across other institutions that published letters pages in their in-house magazines such as including the BBC and the Post Office.²⁰⁷ These pages were the most popular because they informed readers about company policy, celebrated achievements and allowed for complaints to be voiced. While *The Gazette* was widely circulated and available for purchase, overall readership within the JLP varied. Flanders et al. carried out survey research as part of their study in 1968 which reported that forty-seven percent of their sample saw *The Gazette* every week, compared to eighty-eight percent who saw the *Chronicle* weekly.²⁰⁸ These survey results highlighted that Partners exhibited more interest in local issues than national, which was

²⁰⁵ Interview closed to public (4), *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”’: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

²⁰⁶ Heller and Rowlinson, ‘The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets’, p. 1007.

²⁰⁷ Heller and Rowlinson, ‘The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets’, p. 1007.

²⁰⁸ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 205–6.

expected considering matters published in the *Chronicles* would inform Partners about issues in their branch that were likely to directly impact their working lives.

Increasingly, house magazines adopted a commercial role as businesses became more customer centric. The function changed “to internally market the products and services that companies sold in order to generate employee buy-in, communicate marketing campaigns and create ‘brand ambassadors’ amongst the workforce”.²⁰⁹ Reporting in *The Gazette* has continued to be used as a way of smoothing transitions or structural changes such as explanatory articles on new in-store systems and changes to process.²¹⁰ Another use has been to usher through modernisation, such as the shedding of older, nostalgic branch names such as ‘Bainbridges of Newcastle’ to ‘John Lewis, Newcastle’, which was described in *The Gazette* as showing “signs of a brave new world”.²¹¹

While the letters’ pages provided an opportunity for Partners to hold management to account and query decisions, letters highlighted the feelings of individuals and the volume of letters on a particular topic indicated which issues were the most pressing within the Partnership. However, to provide fuller insight into the issues that mattered to Partners, the letters’ pages need to be used in conjunction with other sources such as the minutes of committee and council meetings as members of the management team did. Stuart Hampson, chairman of the JLP between 1993 and 2007, highlighted this in his response to a *Gazette* letter about low morale: “You begin your letter by referring to a

²⁰⁹ Heller and Rowlinson, ‘The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets’, p. 1018.

²¹⁰ Example of when the United Kingdom decimalised its currency: The John Lewis Partnership, ‘It’s D-Day on Monday’, *The Gazette*, 13 February 1971, pp. 27–28..

²¹¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘From the Public Gallery’, *The Gazette*, 21 September 2002, p. 824.

‘constant stream of letters complaining about the Partnership’. Yes, there are some, and I take every one seriously. But the Committees for Communication [...] don’t give a picture of low morale on the shop-floor”.²¹²

2.7 Conclusion

The John Lewis Partnership had a complex democratic structure that all members of the business would have engaged in either explicitly or implicitly through their continued employment. Engagement with the democratic structures or methods of employee ownership ranged from the basic level of accepting the constitution as part of the terms of employment to more exclusive levels such as becoming a trustee. Partners in the JLP were comparable to citizens in a democratic nation and their ‘citizenship’ towards the business can be used to frame questions which relate to the interactions and relationships between Partners, the business and wider society.²¹³ The following chapters will examine the relationship between Partners and the JLP, exploring how membership was defined and then practised in terms of leisure, loyalty, and membership.

²¹² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Response by Stuart Hampson to “Morale” by Downhearted’, *The Gazette*, 8 February 2003, section Readers’ Letters, p. 12.

²¹³ Grant, p. 1188.

3 The Partnership Difference

3.1 Introduction

The John Lewis Partnership (JLP) provided a range of welfare and amenities for its Partners. While welfare and leisure provision were not uncommon in industry, Spedan Lewis' vision for the Partnership's would outlast many of its competitors and continue to develop past his involvement in the business. The JLP argued that their leisure schemes were one of the key benefits of being a member of the Partnership and that Partners, as co-owners in the business, had control over that provision. The JLP gave Partners the opportunity and funding to run clubs, societies and leisure trips that represented their own interest, on the condition that the activity could be argued to be of benefit to the Partner.

The provision for welfare and leisure by the Partnership will be positioned within the wider social movement in the context of the emerging postwar welfare state. In doing so, it will explore the limits of Partnership benefit, the role of class, and how leisure could be used as an indicator of Partnership status. Subsidies were available for a range of activities, through the clubs and societies, holidays in the JLP-owned leisure properties, and individually through ticket subsidy. The JLP gave Partners the opportunity and funding to run clubs, societies, and to claim ticket subsidy, for activities that represented their own interest - on the condition that the activity could be argued to be of benefit to the Partner. Determining what was or was not of benefit to Partners and therefore considered a fundable activity demonstrated clear class divides and revealed a great deal about the notions of citizenship in JLP.

3.2 Inequality, welfare, and work

Between 1880 and 1930, many businesses in industrialised countries introduced welfare programmes tied to work which included housing, pension schemes, profit-sharing, worker participation and various amenities.¹ De Gier stated that the origins of welfare capitalism were rooted within the first and second industrial revolutions, and that these businesses aimed to use welfare schemes to stabilise the workforce, prevent industrial disputes and unionisation, and to motivate and increase productivity.² In the United Kingdom, Quaker entrepreneurs and confectioners, such as Cadbury, Rowntree and Fry, were argued to be at the apex of enlightened capitalism with their “bulky welfare work programmes” which included purpose built housing as well as opportunities in leisure and education.³ Following the Second World War, “the welfare state adopted the main basic elements of former paternalistic corporate welfare work”, a trend that can also be identified in the long-standing welfare schemes offered by the retail sector.⁴

A strong association between work, home, and leisure, had been established during the nineteenth century in the retail sector through the persistence of the living-in system. Living-in involved workers living with their employer, usually until marriage, but had become increasingly obsolete due to economic unfeasibility in the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁵ However, Lancaster argued that the practice continued in the retail

¹ Erik de Gier, *Capitalist Workingman's Paradises Revisited* (Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 13–14.

² de Gier, pp. 14–16.

³ de Gier, p. 18.

⁴ de Gier, p. 23.

⁵ Lise Sanders, *Consumer Fantasies: Labor, Leisure, and the London Shopgirl, 1880-1920* (Ohio State University Press, 2006), p. 41.

trade due to the nature of the work which made the arrangement attractive to employers: “long opening hours, the tendency for many people to shop late at night, the need for stock to be put away after trading and set out before opening time”.⁶ Many department store owners acquired residencies close to their stores, which housed men and women separately and were popular in the larger cities, such as London, Liverpool and Edinburgh. The arrangement required investment to ensure living conditions for staff were acceptable and Lancaster found that Bainbridge, Owen Owen and Whiteley department stores “invested large sums in substantial, if not luxurious, property to house their workers”.⁷ While some employers boasted the benefits of living-in, living conditions varied and the National Union of Shop Assistant’s worked to abolish the system with critiques claiming that accommodation was “overcrowded, poorly ventilated” and the food was of low-quality.⁸ As the sector moved away from the system of living-in, the provision of amenities and welfare remained important to department store owners, becoming a means of managing industrial relations. The role of paternalism supported this shift as more department stores provided benefits for their employees, in an industry where the turnover of workers was high but could be negotiated through reputation of the branch and welfare provision.⁹

In an analysis of the internal structures of the family-owned Parisian department store, *The Bon Marché*, Miller defined paternalism broadly as not only the “employee sponsored benefits for employees but [...] the pervasive idea of an internal work

⁶ Lancaster, p. 126.

⁷ Lancaster, p. 127.

⁸ Alison Moulds, ‘Shop Assistants, “living-in” and Emotional Health, 1880s-1930s’, in *Feelings and Work in Modern History*, ed. by Agnes Arnold-Forster and Alison Moulds (Bloomsbury, 2022), pp. 37–57 (pp. 38–41).

⁹ Lancaster, p. 142.

community that accompanies these benefits and that informs all relationships within the enterprise”.¹⁰ In so doing, Miller examined paternalism both as an “entrepreneurial strategy directed at workers” and as “an entrepreneurial response to businessmen’s own needs for socialization in a period of changing business roles”.¹¹ This pervasive use of paternalism in the business combined “family values with bureaucratic realities” that allowed the business to respond to change without losing their values that were embedded through the loyal work community and established traditions.¹²

Similar to Bon Marché, the ideology of the JLP relied on the founder, Spedan Lewis, and the Lewis family more broadly in the early years of the Partnership. Spedan Lewis embedded the ideology into bureaucratic practice through the rules and regulations within the constitution and the democratic governing structures. This was in addition to the typical management hierarchies and the internal press that shaped relationships within the business. The embedding of the ideology throughout the bureaucratic processes within the JLP ensured its longevity after the founder’s exit from the business.

Crafted paternalistic agendas were seen in many large businesses throughout this period, where the owners used their ideals to present themselves and their businesses in appealing ways either to consumers or workers, for example, the founder of Tesco, Jack Cohen, “presented himself as the authentic champion of the working-class housewife” in his appeal to consumers.¹³ Joseph Rowntree, of the Rowntree Cocoa Works, took an active interest in his workforce, inviting “selected employees on Saturdays one by one for

¹⁰ Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store* (Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 7–8.

¹¹ Miller, p. 9.

¹² Miller, pp. 237–38.

¹³ Gurney, ‘The Battle of the Consumer in Postwar Britain’, p. 974.

seaside walks at Scarborough”.¹⁴ He also began the *Cocoa Works Magazine* in 1902 as a new means of communication with his employees as the business rapidly expanded.¹⁵ His son, Seebohm, furthered the interest of the business in worker’s rights and conditions through sociological research into poverty.¹⁶

Prior to acquisition to the JLP, Jones Brothers of Holloway, Peter Jones and Bainbridges of Newcastle were all reported by trade magazines to already have progressive policies toward staff welfare and provision of welfare facilities, as were the JLP’s competitors, Marks and Spencer (M&S).¹⁷ The directors of M&S were concerned with the happiness of their employees, which was impacted by work schedules in the retail industry, and used welfare services, such as spacious dining-rooms, high-quality meals at low prices and provision of training for staff to compensate.¹⁸ Staff welfare was then cemented in M&S through the creation of the Welfare department, headed by Flora Solomon, in 1932. Welfare provision moved to include medical and dental schemes, a pension scheme and an additional benevolent trust for anyone outside of the pension scheme. The schemes were “part of a considered policy designed to induce in the employee the feeling that in his working life he was not at the mercy of impersonal forces but was an integral part of an organization to which his personal welfare was a matter of close and continuous concern”.¹⁹

¹⁴ Asa Briggs, *Social Thought and Social Action: A Study of the Work of Seebohm Rowntree 1871-1954* (Longmans Green & Company, 1961), pp. 91–92.

¹⁵ Briggs, p. 11.

¹⁶ Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (Macmillan, 1901); Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty and Progress: A Second Social Survey of York* (Longmans Green & Company, 1941); Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty and the Welfare State: A Third Social Survey of York Dealing with Only Economic Questions* (Longmans Green & Company, 1951).

¹⁷ Lancaster, p. 137.

¹⁸ Goronwy Rees, *St Michael: A History of Marks & Spencer* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), p. 92.

¹⁹ Rees, p. 95.

Welfare provision in the form of pension schemes, generous paid holiday and medical services were similarly introduced by the JLP in the interwar period which helped to cement the “image of a new Utopian organisation”.²⁰ A provision that Spedan was particularly proud of was Family Allowances which he introduced in 1940 before Parliament implemented an equivalent act.²¹ Spedan Lewis had long acknowledged the inequality between employers and employees. In 1908, Spedan found that all three hundred of his father’s employees in Oxford Street were collectively receiving around £16,000 per year compared to himself, his brother, Oswald Lewis, and his father, who were earning the same amount each and earning interest on their capital.²² Contemporary debates on inequality and living standards were propelled by visible societal problems such as the disparity identified by Spedan between the living standards of workers versus of the employer, caused by low wages compared to the income of that of the employer.²³ In 1909, Spedan was injured in a horse-riding accident and spent two years recovering and he described witnessing “the emergence of both communism and the labour movement” from the sidelines, which informed his plans of what to do with his father’s business once he inherited it.²⁴

Quaker business leaders such as Seebohm Rowntree and Edward Cadbury aimed to “reinvent business as a means of social and moral progress” by introducing welfare

²⁰ Lancaster, p. 149..

²¹ Green, ““Secret Lists and Sanctions”: The Blacklisting of the John Lewis Partnership and the Politics of Pay in 1970s Britain”, p. 227.

²² Cox, p. 32.

²³ John Kenneth Galbraith, *Economics in Perspective: A Critical History* (Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 114–15.

²⁴ Jonathan Blatchford, ‘John Lewis & Partners Memory Store’, *John Spedan Lewis: Born into the Business in 1885*, 2019 <https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/branch_finder/branches_oxford_street/early_days-7-2/john_spedan_lewis_early_impact_on_the_business> [accessed 12 November 2019].

schemes and creating an environment centred on work but that also encompassed leisure.²⁵ They pioneered the British interwar management movement through series of conferences and lectures and involving members across various levels of the business to become involved in solving challenges that faced the organisation of industry more broadly.²⁶ While not advocating workers' control, Seebohm argued for a higher standard of living evidenced by his own in-depth research in York, where the cocoa works were based.²⁷ The introduction of "scientific management procedures" improved efficiency and productivity while also employing a "wide-ranging welfare programme" that appealed to workers through a human relations approach.²⁸ Maclean et al. argued that these ideas of "business as service" and idea of responsible business were circulating in the interwar period as an early frontrunner of corporate social responsibility and form of management control.²⁹

These ideas were also being circulated across Europe. The Bata Shoe Company based in then Czechoslovakia were influenced by Fordism and the German Garden City movement and began investing in welfare and education, building hospitals, housing and sports facilities.³⁰ As with Cadbury and Rowntree, Bata invested in improving working conditions in their factories and built residential properties for staff to improve their living

²⁵ Timo Luks, 'Building the "House of Industry": Factory Citizenship and Gendered Spaces at Cadbury's and Rowntree's', *Labour History Review*, 85.3, pp. 233–52 (p. 235).

²⁶ Mairi Maclean, Gareth Shaw, and Charles Harvey, 'Business as Service? Human Relations and the British Interwar Management Movement', *Human Relations*, 75.8 (2022), pp. 1585–1614 (p. 1588).

²⁷ Michael Weatherburn, 'Human Relations' Invented Traditions: Sociotechnical Research and Worker Motivation at the Interwar Rowntree Cocoa Works', *Human Relations*, 73.7 (2020), pp. 899–923 (p. 902).

²⁸ Maclean, Shaw, and Harvey, pp. 1589–90.

²⁹ Maclean, Shaw, and Harvey, p. 1591.

³⁰ Milan Balaban and others, 'The Social Welfare System in Bata Company Towns (1920s-1950s): Between Transnational Vision and Local Settings', *International Review of Social History*, 68.1, pp. 13–40 (pp. 18–19).

conditions.³¹ Through the provision of welfare and leisure, Tomás Bat'a aimed to create a “working class composed of workers who would be loyal to the firm, which granted them employment and higher living standards”.³² These systems of social welfare shared similarities with the JLP although Spedan Lewis’s dream of building a ‘Partnership Village’ was never realised.³³

Many of the ideas around the provision of welfare and education were not new and had been at the heart of the co-operative movement that also experienced growth throughout the interwar period.³⁴ The co-operative movement had a history of successfully building grassroots communities around consumption and workers’ rights, creating a co-operative culture through active membership and the principle of moral economy.³⁵ Membership often included the provision of education and recreation as well as financial benefit through the dividend. Spedan Lewis identified the establishment of the JLP with that of the Rochdale Pioneers who he described as making “profit in the ordinary way” but who “hit upon a new technique” creating a “colossal consumer-cooperative ‘movement’”.³⁶ He hoped for a similar shift in system of producer-cooperation.³⁷

³¹ Balaban and others, pp. 20–21.

³² Balaban and others, p. 21.

³³ ‘The Acquisition of Odney’, *John Lewis Partnership Memory Store*, 2018 <https://jlpmemorystore.org.uk/content/being_a_partner/leisure/residential_clubs/the_odney_club/the_acquisition_of_odney> [accessed 4 November 2022].

³⁴ Peter Gurney, ‘Co-Operation and the “new Consumerism” in Interwar England’, *Business History*, 54.6 (2012), pp. 905–24 (p. 906).

³⁵ Peter Gurney, *Co-Operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930* (Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 23.

³⁶ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 5.

³⁷ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 19.

While acknowledging the role of consumer co-operatives in society, Spedan Lewis emphasised what he argued was their limitation in “removing from our modern world the evils that have arisen from the gross distortion that Private Enterprise has produced in the proper working of capitalism”.³⁸ He argued that consumer co-operatives still exploited workers to benefit the consumer through the payment of dividends to customers whereas producer co-operatives focused on exploiting the consumer for the workers’ gain.³⁹ Spedan Lewis revisited the topic in *Fairer Shares* maintaining his stance, reflecting that while consumer co-operative movement had grown over the last century, “its growth has been confined to a rather limited range of activities” and arguing for further application of the producer co-operative model.⁴⁰

The powerlessness of workers frequented debates of Marxism and Socialism and affected industries in varying ways through the work of unions, ideas around worker participation and questions of ownership. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, founders of the London School of Economics, argued that English history was “marching steadily” towards Socialism,⁴¹ and that capitalism had not only damaged working relationships but that it had also broken-down urban neighbourhood communities that had developed around the growth of industry and services.⁴² The Webbs reasoned that trade union and co-operative socialism were a way to combat the loss of neighbourhood community.⁴³

³⁸ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 192.

³⁹ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 192.

⁴⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 80.

⁴¹ Margaret Cole, ‘The Webbs and Social Theory’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 12.2 (1961), pp. 93–105 (pp. 94–95).

⁴² Aaron Windel, ‘Co-Operatives and Technocrats, or “the Fabian Agony” Revisited’, in *Brave New World: Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building in Britain Between the Wars*, ed. by Laura Beers and Geraint Thomas (Institute of Historical Studies, 2011), p. 253.

⁴³ Windel, p. 253.

With the establishment of the Partnership, Spedan Lewis likened the Partnership to a national community, arguing that “a partnership, as it grows, must tend to reproduce on a tiny scale the general community, a national democracy”.⁴⁴ By embracing some aspects of socialism through the Partnership model, Spedan aimed to construct community within a capitalist organisation that met with prevalent ideas about economic planning in postwar Britain.⁴⁵

The Labour Party planned to improve conditions in the postwar period through public ownership and state controls to achieve reconstruction, reform and “fair shares”.⁴⁶ The rhetoric of “fair shares” was shared with the cooperative movement,⁴⁷ and by Spedan Lewis in his second publication, *Fairer Shares*, but for the Labour Government of 1945, “fair shares” were established through social welfare policies.⁴⁸ Informed by William Beveridge and his influential report, social welfare policies focused on combatting the “five giants” defined in the Beveridge Report as “Want, Ignorance, Squalor, Idleness, and Disease”.⁴⁹ The development of national insurance scheme and the Labour Exchange Act aided those who were unable to work due to sickness or were unemployed; these policies aimed to temporarily lessen the financial pressures of the unemployed and prevent exploitation by forcing the unemployed to accept inferior wages. In 1946, the National Insurance Act was passed with meant that all workers, except married women,

⁴⁴ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 439.

⁴⁵ Daniel Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning: The Debate on Economic Planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford Academic, 2011) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198206477.003.0009>> [accessed 4 March 2024].

⁴⁶ Peter Sloman, ‘Rethinking a Progressive Movement: The Liberal and Labour Parties in the 1945 General Election’, *Historical Research*, 84.226 (2010).

⁴⁷ Gurney, ‘The Battle of the Consumer in Postwar Britain’, p. 964.

⁴⁸ Jose Harris, *William Beveridge* (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 414.

⁴⁹ Harris, *William Beveridge*, p. 414.

were required to contribute towards National Insurance.⁵⁰ Beveridge claimed that a major cause of poverty was the interruption of earning which National Insurance covered in the event of unemployment, sickness, or retirement.⁵¹ The national coverage of those in need with a compulsory contribution to an insurance policy, fit with postwar socio-economic perceptions as well as “evaluations of virtue, citizenship, gender, personal freedom, and the nature of the state”.⁵²

In many respects, the JLP was ahead of the government when it came to welfare reforms that would be covered by National Insurance. In September 1941, a pension scheme passed through the council unanimously for Partners who had served a qualifying fifteen years.⁵³ It would be calculated by “dividing the number of years’ service by sixty, and multiplying it by the average pay over that period” and was deemed “more generous” than other schemes at the time despite the fifteen-year qualifying period.⁵⁴ Between 1941 and 1953, “£1,494,741 was accumulated to start a non-contributory Pension Fund” in spite of a five year suspension of bonus in the postwar period.⁵⁵ Peter Cox argued that Spedan also pioneered the beginnings of maternity leave before it became law by giving expectant mothers an unpaid “leave of absence for *not less than* thirteen weeks, of which five shall be after the birth”.⁵⁶ In addition, the Partnership also provided dowries for the women workers about to be married which was set at “5% if the pay accumulated to date, up to a maximum of half a years’ pay, for any woman with more than five years of

⁵⁰ *National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Act, 9 & 10 Geo. 6, 1946, CH. 62*

<<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1946/62/contents/enacted>> [accessed 27 April 2024].

⁵¹ Harris, “Contract” and “Citizenship”, p. 134.

⁵² Harris, “Contract” and “Citizenship”, p. 134.

⁵³ Cox, p. 131.

⁵⁴ Cox, p. 131.

⁵⁵ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 9.

⁵⁶ Cox, p. 132.

service”.⁵⁷ These provisions for Partners were part of the broader Partnership Benefit that made the JLP more attractive than other retailers or employers and aimed to offer “full equality of opportunity”.⁵⁸

The concept of a classless society in Britain was debated in the postwar period by sociologists and historians who argued whether the Second World War had been a “leveller of classes” and whether classes were either permanently or somewhat evened out by the war.⁵⁹ In the Partnership, Spedan Lewis used a wide range of benefits and donations in his attempts to foster a more equal society. In his book, *Fairer Shares*, he listed the contributions of the JLP:

“approximately £125,000 in subsidy of Government pay for war-service, Sick Pay (for the latest year, 1953/4, this was £60,000), operation by the Central Council of what is in effect the Partnership’s system of free insurance against exceptional need (for the same latest year £5,000), Family Allowances to Partners whose ordinary earnings were held by the Council to require this, subsidies for holidays, subsidised tickets for concerts and theatres to make good reserved seats available at prices members feel they can afford and incidentally to increase the demand for worthwhile plays and music (at present about £1,500 a year upon about 4,500 tickets), £8,000 upon two-year engagement of the Boyd Neel Orchestra for a series of concerts and £46,229 upon an experimental start with adult education.”⁶⁰

He argued that these benefits not only helped to retain the best workers in the Partnership but also increased the Partnership’s progress toward a classless society where all Partners were offered increased accessibility to all the amenities no matter their level of

⁵⁷ Cox, p. 131.

⁵⁸ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 172.

⁵⁹ Penny Summerfield, ‘The “Levelling of Class”’, in *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War*, ed. by Harold L. Smith (Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 179–207 (pp. 179–80).

⁶⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 9.

income.⁶¹ Spedan, through the ‘Partnership Benefit’, aimed to ‘level’ society for his Partners within the Partnership.

The ultimate aim declared by the Partnership was the “happiness of all its members” which was reflected in Spedan Lewis’s attitude towards the principle of management in the business, but also leisure.⁶² Spedan argued that the amenities he sought to finance could be considered the “nature of mere pleasure” but that they were beneficial for the mind and body as well as “desirable for the Partnership’s efficiency”.⁶³ The investment in sports and activities by the Partnership aimed to develop skills amongst Partners which would be of physical and cultural benefit. Spedan intended that the amenities should be of ‘first-class’ quality and that the expenditure policy should be imaginative.⁶⁴ He argued that this investment would give Partners “an indestructible possession” through the skills gained and would work to “foster pleasant social leisure-time contact between Partners of all ranks”.⁶⁵ This demonstrated Spedan’s efforts to move towards a classless society in the Partnership, but also his ideas on industrial relations by fostering cohesive relationships between all Partners.

3.3 Partnership welfare and amenities

As members and co-owners, Partners were able to participate in the culture of the Partnership and experience the ‘benefits’ of ownership, for example, having the opportunity to visit the opera or holiday at Odney. Spedan argued that provisions such as

⁶¹ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, pp. 39–40.

⁶² The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 14.

⁶³ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 273.

⁶⁴ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 276.

⁶⁵ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, pp. 274–76.

these attempted to make the Partnership ‘truly a classless society’, offering high quality amenities to all, regardless of their level of income.⁶⁶ He acknowledged that the leisure scheme would not be able to appeal to all Partners, but also hoped that for some, the provision of amenities would attract and retain workers with particular interests or priorities, from tennis to a good medical service.⁶⁷

The provision of welfare and amenities was framed as another way of sharing gain with Partners, as such the constitution protected some of the JLP’s spending on provisions. Article 9 of the JLP constitution stated that:

“the Chairman shall cause the Partnership to place each year at the disposal of the Council to the extent of at least one per cent of the total amount that accrued to the Partnership’s members by way of remuneration for services [...] of the previous year”.⁶⁸

In other words, the Central Council had at least one percent of the Partnership’s paysheet at its disposal annually. This figure also included any amount that was “distributed to the members [...] either by way of free insurance against exceptional misfortune or by way of general Partnership Benefit”.⁶⁹ This was distributed by the Central Committee for Ways and Means to various other committees of the Central Council and individual Branch Councils for use towards social activities, charitable donations, and gifts to current and retired Partners under general Partnership Benefit.⁷⁰ While the councils were able to decide how they spent their budget, the Chairman had “veto over any proposed

⁶⁶ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 40.

⁶⁷ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 39.

⁶⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 16.

⁶⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 17.

⁷⁰ As shown in the annual report of the Committee for Claims published in *The John Lewis Partnership, The Gazette*, 28 February 1976, p. 91.

expenditure” that could be considered damaging to the JLP.⁷¹ Councillors were also prohibited from using funds for their own benefit. Accountability was ensured by the publication of the minutes of each committee in the relevant branch *Chronicle* or *The Gazette*, which allowed transparency and for Partners to query motions in the letters or directly with councillors.

The role of the Committee for Claims in the JLP was to administer funds for internal claims for funds as well as external donations to charities. The Committee for Claims was originally set up as a sub-Committee of the Staff Council in Peter Jones by Spedan Lewis and described in 1926 as a way “to deal with all applications for donations or assistance of any kind, not only from outside sources but from our own Partners”.⁷² Through the Committee for Claims, the Partnership managed a “system of free insurance against exceptional misfortune” which enabled Partners to make claims when experiencing financial hardship.⁷³ The committees were staffed by councillors, rather than a management team, as Spedan argued that the composition of the committee combatted concerns of favouritism and ensured that funds would reach “deserving applicants”.⁷⁴ Claimants were kept as anonymous to the majority of the committee members with only the clerk, registrar and staff nurse aware of the applicant’s identity.⁷⁵ The system has been described favourably by external examiners of the Partnership, but also by those who

⁷¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership, August 1999 Revised Draft (Supplement)’, *The Gazette*, 21 August 1999, p. 9.

⁷² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Claims Committee’, *The John Lewis Partnership*, 6 March 1926, p. 3.

⁷³ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 145.

⁷⁴ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 145.

⁷⁵ Interview closed to public (1).

served on it: “That was one of the committees that I loved serving on the most because you could see the weight being lifted off of somebody’s shoulders”.⁷⁶

The provision of additional support or assistance for employees through a committee or fund financed by the business was not unusual in this period. Boots pharmacy introduced a fund in the early 1900s called the “General Benevolent Fund”, which developed into the “Boots Group Benevolent Fund”.⁷⁷ The fund provided help to employees who were absent from work due to illness or domestic reasons and no longer received sick pay, and retired colleagues who had fallen on hard times.⁷⁸ Similarly, M&S introduced two additional welfare schemes in 1932: the Marks and Spencer Benevolent Trust which “provided retirement benefits for those outside the pension scheme” and a Welfare Committee which represented both directors and staff and “met weekly to consider personal problems referred to it”.⁷⁹ Spedan Lewis acknowledged schemes by other employers providing similar assistance, stating they had done so “some as a matter of intelligent selfishness, some from better motives and some from a mixture of the two” and highlighting the value of such schemes.⁸⁰ However, he argued that the Committee for Claims was better managed than alternatives because of its administration by councillors, rather than specifically management.

The Committee for Claims was able to provide support for Partners financially through either grants or loans, but also provided additional holistic support where

⁷⁶ T Keith.

⁷⁷ Boots UK, *Boots Benevolent Fund: About the Fund*, 2022 <[⁷⁸ Boots UK.](https://www.boots-uk.com/corporate-social-responsibility/what-we-do/healthy-inclusive-workplace/boots-benevolent-fund/about-the-fund/>> [accessed 4 November 2022].</p></div><div data-bbox=)

⁷⁹ Rees, pp. 94–95.

⁸⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 271.

required. One retired Partner described her work on the committee and the wrap-around support provided:

“Normally we either give people loans, if it’s just like – but if they’re in too much financial difficulty, sometimes we used to give them a grant and pay their electric or gas or anything like that they needed. Then we used to sort-of do a budget for them, sort-of to get them help and used to send them to Step Change, I think it’s called that now but it was Pay Plan or something before which was financial – outside financial help where they could sit down with the people if they wanted to and then would work out a budget for them.”⁸¹

As with many of the Partnership’s benefits, the work of the Committee was seen to fulfil multiple roles. An interviewee described how the insurance acted as a ‘human side’ of the Partnership which encouraged retention and loyalty:

“It does two things. It makes people more productive because they know somebody’s going to look after them. Certainly, I think less likely to be dishonest because you don’t need to dip your fingers in the till if somebody’s saying “don’t worry, we can help” but it just was very much a human side of the Partnership.”⁸²

Funds were also available to support Partners outside of financial hardship. One interviewee described how members of staff in her branch had secretly gone to the Committee of Claims on her behalf to request funds for her to take a long-distance trip to visit members of her family for the first time. She described how wonderful the trip had been and the loyalty that gifts, like the one she received from the Committee for Claims, inspired:

⁸¹ H Dance, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”’: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

⁸² T Keith.

“That’s where you worked and that’s why we all love it and you know, do your best because if you work for somewhere like that, obviously what can you say you know. There’s not many places that’d do something like that, is there?”⁸³

Within the one per cent budget of the Central Council, the Partnership budgeted for welfare provision within the business, but also externally through charitable giving. Philanthropic work has been strongly linked to the ethos of the Partnership and establishing the reputation of the business in local communities and amongst Partners.⁸⁴ This was an enduring postwar attitude of “maintaining the goodwill of the wider public” through charitable giving in larger businesses and subsequent governments from the 1950s worked alongside corporations to link charitable giving to corporate social responsibility.⁸⁵

Partners were encouraged to recommend charitable organisations that they volunteered for or had received support from who “had reason to recommend the quality of an organisation’s work”.⁸⁶ In addition, donations were made in response to national or international events or emergencies for example, after the death of Princess Diana in 1997, the Council agreed to provide further funds to the annual budget in order to donate to her memorial fund and then following the London bombings in 2005,⁸⁷ one interviewee described being approached by the chairman, Stuart Hampson, to make a special donation:

⁸³ D Greenway, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”’: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

⁸⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Branch Charities Commission Show Increased Confidence’, *The Gazette*, 31 October 1998, p. 998.

⁸⁵ Michael Marinetto, ‘The Historical Development of Business Philanthropy: Social Responsibility in the New Corporate Economy’, *Business History*, 41.4 (1999), pp. 1–20 (pp. 7–8).

⁸⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Making a Difference’, *The Gazette*, 28 October 2000, p. 1163.

⁸⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 17 November, Part 2’, *The Gazette*, 6 December 1997, p. 1178.

‘The one I remember most was when we donated a fully-equipped ambulance to the London Ambulance Service, following on from those bombings of the buses and tubes – I forget what year that was now – but there was those terrible tragedies and the London Ambulance service had been very hard pressed and the chairman, Sir Stuart Hampson at the time, approached us on the Charities Committee to make a joint donation from his funds to the London Ambulance Service to endow or commission, whatever word you like to use, a complete fully-fitted ambulance on behalf of the Partnership and that was duly done and we had a handing over ceremony and a bit of razzamatazz about it.’⁸⁸

For many branch councillors, the opportunity to assist local charities financially was a source of personal pride. Despite the impact on communities, the JLP did not seek publicity for its charitable works, so the donations given by branch councils were recorded and celebrated locally in the *Chronicles*. One interviewee described the impact that the Charities Committee had locally:

‘For example, we had an appeal from an inner-city youth club at one time which was very moribund. The leader, the youth leader, couldn’t seem to enthuse the kids, the parents weren’t terribly interested, the whole thing was very run down and the youth leader kind-of wanted to revive the club but needed equipment to do it. [...] And someone on the committee said, “Well how much have they got in the bank?” [...] And I think from memory it was something like sixty quid and this committee member said, “Well look, you know a hundred pounds is not an awful lot to this committee but it’s going to more than double their bank balance so why don’t we do that?”, so the committee agreed and as secretary I duly put that into action and sent them a cheque for a hundred quid. Well, you know, literally, almost the tears of gratitude for such a small sum, made you feel – gosh, you know, this relatively small sum from the company point of view has made such a huge difference to this rather struggling youth club and that’s a good feeling! You have to admit it.’⁸⁹

A report of the Central Council’s charitable giving was published annually and detailed the work of the Central Committee as well as highlights of the branch councils’ work. The report included details of the amount of charitable giving across different

⁸⁸ R Wynn, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”’: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2022, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

⁸⁹ R Wynn.

sectors, such as care of the sick, major aid and youth and children societies and offered brief summaries of the work that donations had contributed to.⁹⁰ This kept Partners informed of the work of the committee but also allowed for transparency and accountability into the donations given by the JLP. In addition, in-depth articles were published to provide further details into select donations and the background to the charity, for example when the JLP adopted a leopard at Marwell Zoological Park and explored how the donation would be used, but as well as the Trust's further work into preservation of wildlife.⁹¹ While not publicly advertising the charitable works of the JLP, the space granted in the Partnership's publications demonstrated company culture and emphasised Partnership principles. This approach mirrored the JLP's long-standing advertising strategy in which the business relied on reputation, over advertising when opening branches or showcasing new products.⁹²

In an attempt to make the committee system more democratic, the Charities Committee was created in 1996 which split the responsibilities between internal and external charitable giving. The creation of a separate Charities Committee intended to increase local involvement and participation by allowing members who were not branch councillors to become involved, further democratising the distribution of welfare.⁹³ After the formation of the Charities Committee, the role of the Committee for Claims centred on internal requests only. There was a Central Committee for Claims associated with the Central Council and then Committees set up under Branch Councils to offer support to

⁹⁰ Example in The John Lewis Partnership, 'Making a Difference', p. 1164.

⁹¹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Wildlife Conservation', *The Gazette*, 24 August 1985, p. 699.

⁹² Cox, p. 206.

⁹³ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Charitable Giving', *The Gazette*, 8 June 1996, p. 478.

Partners in-branch.⁹⁴ Each of the committees were designated a budget each year by the Committee of Ways and Means, out of the one per cent Central Council allowance, to provide gifts for active Partners, gifts to pensioned Partners, gifts outside, expenses and amenities.⁹⁵

Changes to the committee structure also emphasised Partnership involvement in charitable giving at a local level. Requests for charitable donations at a locally were organised by postcode and referred to the nearest Branch Council and their Charities Committee.⁹⁶ All requests, at Central and Branch level, were managed by a clerk to the committee. For each quarterly meeting of the committee, the clerk would “receive appeals from local charities and would assemble them into an agenda with a suggested course of action” which would then be discussed by the committee.⁹⁷ The role of a branch committee clerk was described as:

“It was a proper kind-of full-time job and if say for example, there was any element of doubt over a particular charitable appeal, for example the clerk was quite free to actually arrange to go out and visit the charity and see what it was all about and assess it so as to be able to give a full report back to the council”⁹⁸

The JLP continued to look for ways to make an impact to local communities and in 1999, as part of celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Trust Settlement, set up the Partnership Golden Jubilee Trust which gave Partner the opportunity to take a paid secondment to do charitable work.⁹⁹ The Trust covered the pay costs of the Partner which relieved departments of the financial burden of the secondment and also allowed

⁹⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Charitable Giving’, p. 478.

⁹⁵ As shown in the annual report of the Committee for Claims published in The John Lewis Partnership, 28 February 1976, p. 91. Prior to 1996, gifts outside the Partnership were also included in the budget.

⁹⁶ R Wynn.

⁹⁷ R Wynn.

⁹⁸ R Wynn.

⁹⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Giving Back to the Community’, *The Gazette*, 30 October 1999, p. 1104.

for cover to be found if necessary.¹⁰⁰ The Trust, an independent charity, was managed by trustees and funded by an endowment of £5 million from the JLP, a portion of a £30 million VAT refund received by the business in 1998.¹⁰¹ Applications were initially managed by branch charities committees and then sent to trustees for final approval. The aim of the Trust was to 'lend' Partners to charitable organisations for a period which could range from one week to six months. While there were no formal qualifying periods, trustees tended to look at length of service when considering applications to ensure that a sufficient level of commitment to the business had been shown which could demonstrate a Partner's suitability for secondment.¹⁰² In addition, the aims of the secondment had to be achievable within the timeframe requested. Partners were encouraged to keep in touch with their branch throughout their secondment and asked that their work would feature in the branch *Chronicle* to share the experience with branch colleagues.¹⁰³

Secondments offered by the Golden Jubilee Trust were described as a "three-way win and very rewarding for everyone"; the charity benefited from the input of the Partner, the Partner from the new experience and challenge, and the branch from the development of the Partner as well as the community benefit.¹⁰⁴ The Trust offered Partners an opportunity to try something different or to develop work they were already doing such as one Partner who used her secondment to support the Hope City Enterprise, part of a

¹⁰⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Golden Jubilee Trust: Making a Difference (Supplement)', *The Gazette*, 9 June 2001, p. vi.

¹⁰¹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Golden Jubilee Trust: Making a Difference (Supplement)', p. vi; The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Partnership's Golden Jubilee', *The Gazette*, 3 October 1998, p. 875.

¹⁰² The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Golden Jubilee Trust: Making a Difference (Supplement)', p. vi.

¹⁰³ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Going for Gold', *The Gazette*, 8 July 2006, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Going for Gold', p. 9.

community and business centre in Sheffield that focused on welfare to support social regeneration:

“I’ve never been involved with a charity before, but I was particularly interested in working with children and families [...] It’s fantastic that the Partnership gives staff the change to do something like this. I don’t know of any other company that does”.¹⁰⁵

Organisations reported the benefits to the Partners, citing the difference that Partners made during their secondment and complimenting the business on its scheme: “I knew that [JLP] was a fair and equal employer, but that that extended to charity. It’s a huge benefit for organisation such as ours to have people like Mary join us for a time”.¹⁰⁶ The Golden Jubilee Trust was also recognised by the Charities Aid Foundation and by Business in the Community for its charitable work.¹⁰⁷

3.4 Subsidised leisure

The connection between ‘public’ philanthropy and ‘private’ paternalism was stressed by Finlayson who argued that private benevolence was essential to philanthropy.¹⁰⁸ The link between philanthropy and paternalism was demonstrated most clearly in Spedan Lewis’s justification of ticket subsidy; “subsidised tickets for concerts and theatres to make good reserved seats available at prices members feel they can afford and incidentally to increase the demand for worthwhile plays and music”.¹⁰⁹ Spedan continued to describe the ‘incidental’ impact of Partnership support for the arts through

¹⁰⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Going for Gold’, pp. 12–15.

¹⁰⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Going for Gold’, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Going for Gold’, p. 23.

¹⁰⁸ Geoffrey Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990* (Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 59.

¹⁰⁹ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 9.

subsidy, highlighting that the Partnership was the “chief individual supporter of the Glyndebourne Opera Festival” and without the support of the JLP, the festival would not have resumed following the Second World War.¹¹⁰ The Glyndebourne Opera Festival was one of the events that Spedan supported through the JLP, but the Partnership’s support for a wide range of organisations and events continued to develop through the business’ interests and of the Partners.

All of the subsidies provided by the Partnership aimed to widen access to activities and experiences for Partners which would either develop their skills or be of benefit to their minds and bodies. While the JLP did make changes to its leisure and welfare schemes for Partners, these were often progressed slowly, and the traditionalist attitude demonstrated continued paternalism in the Partnership. However, some of the changes were strongly led by Partners, such as the formation and closure of clubs and societies which depended completely on their popularity among Partners. In addition, cultural impacts have shaped the Partnership’s leisure scheme, with the move toward corporate memberships and subsidies extended to dependants encouraged partly by increased individualism.

The JLP’s first club was started only four years after the first trust settlement solidified the Partnership model. In 1933, the Sabeema Art Club, named after John Spedan Lewis’s wife, Sarah Beatrice Lewis,¹¹¹ was formed following a letter in the *Gazette* from A. H. Wilenski who suggested that “there may be other Partners who have the habit

¹¹⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 9.

¹¹¹ ‘John Lewis Partnership Memory Store’, *Sabeema*, 2018
<https://jlpmemorystore.org.uk/content/being_a_partner/leisure/clubs_societies/sabeema_art_club/sabeema> [accessed 5 March 2024].

of drawing and painting in their leisure time, and that there might be a sufficient number of such Partners to form a Partnership Art Club".¹¹² The formation of other clubs and societies followed a similar trend, where Partners would write expressions of interest to the national in-house magazine, *The Gazette*, or their local *Chronicle* to create grass-root organisation based on shared interests.¹¹³ The Partnership clubs and societies were not static and were sometimes created, and then closed, following popular trends, such as the Microcomputer Club which existed between 1982 and 1986.¹¹⁴ Funding for the clubs and societies was originally managed centrally but additional funds could be allocated for larger spends for trips or equipment.

The clubs and societies were seen as a key way to embody Spedan Lewis's vision for a 'classless society'. For example, the Sailing Club, which started in 1951, was described as "a testament to John Spedan Lewis's determination to make costly pastimes available to everyone".¹¹⁵ In 1964, the cost of a day's sailing was calculated as "three-eighths of a day's pay per day's sailing" capped at "one and a half guineas".¹¹⁶ By 2001, annual membership to the club cost £2 while sailing weekends were charged at "£15 per day, including food, accommodation on board and travel to the Hamble at Southampton where the yachts [were] moored".¹¹⁷ Additional running costs were paid for through the clubs and societies budgets of each branch which hosted a club. The JLP hired tutors to

¹¹² A. H. Wilenski, 'A Partnership Art Club', *The Gazette of the John Lewis Partnership*, 25 November 1933, p. 759.

¹¹³ See examples in The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Radio Amateurs', *The Gazette*, 26 February 1996, section Readers' letters, p. 107; The John Lewis Partnership, 'Partners' Handbook 7th Edition'.

¹¹⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Leisure', *The Gazette*, 11 December 1982, p. 1035; The John Lewis Partnership, 'Central Council Summary of Proceedings on 9 February', 21 February 1987, p. 64.

¹¹⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Fifty Years Afloat', *The Gazette*, 14 April 2001, p. 301.

¹¹⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Sailing Club', *The Gazette*, 18 April 1964, p. 295.

¹¹⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Fifty Years Afloat', p. 302.

develop Partners' skills and demonstrated Spedan's vision to extend activities to members of the Partnership, with one member describing the experience as: "When I found myself sailing up the Medina, surrounded by yachts of all types and sizes – the playthings of the rich, in fact – it really hit home that this had been the Founder's aim from the start".¹¹⁸ In addition to the sailing club, Partners also had the opportunity to join other clubs or societies that offered subsidies for activities which included longer periods of travel. Some of these clubs included skiing, winemaking and appreciation, and venture or hiking club. The group trips were part of Spedan's vision of Partners doing activities together and were important to Partners:

'We were in the hiking club, had a fantastic hiking club. There were about thirty of us and when we retired, we still carried on with it. We used to go – a whole group of us used to go away once a year, all over England, and places you know, lovely. We've had some of the greatest holidays you can possibly imagine – the biggest laughs.'¹¹⁹

Social activities in the Partnership could also serve an additional purpose beyond widening the experience of their members. The Partnership's production of the *Revue*, originating from a small-scale play put on in the restaurant of one of the branches, was a satirical production which mocked all parties, "Partners and non-Partners, the Managers and the Managed".¹²⁰ Despite its origin as a grass-root production, the *Revue* was described as having "an important place in the Founder's schemes for communication", stating that "the Founder shared with Aristotle the opinion that drama could provide a catharsis for purging pent-up emotions".¹²¹

¹¹⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Fifty Years Afloat', p. 302.

¹¹⁹ D Greenway.

¹²⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 43.

¹²¹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Proud of It', *The Gazette*, 14 January 1984, section Readers' letters, p. 1147.

In addition to subsidising clubs and activities for groups of Partners, the JLP would subsidise tickets to the theatre, musical performances, and later film showings. The ticket subsidy was offered to individual Partners, rather than through membership of a club or society and the Partnership stipulated what was and was not suitable for subsidy. Originally, this was controlled through applications for specific performances and then ticket raffles if oversubscribed,¹²² however this shifted so that Partners could apply for fifty percent subsidy for specific productions or theatres.¹²³ The productions featured on the list available for subsidy were “theatre, classical and jazz concerts, opera, dance and selected films”, as well as “the cost of entrance ticket to major art exhibitions”.¹²⁴ There were limitations on what Partners could apply for, for example, subsidy was not given “on musicals or open-air performances of any description”.¹²⁵ Restrictions were also placed on film tickets with a “limited number” qualifying which were “most likely to be those released through independent cinemas”.¹²⁶ For example, for the first week of February in 1980, the central subsidy for films was restricted to “*The Europeans*. Curzon. *The Bill Douglas Trilogy (My Childhood, My Ain Folk, and My Way Home)*. Academy 3. *Wise Blood*. Camden Plaza”, restricting not only the film choice, but the cinema.¹²⁷

The final way the John Lewis Partnership subsidised leisure was through holidays at the JLP-owned leisure properties. The first portion of land at Odney was purchased by Spedan Lewis in 1926 and soon expanded.¹²⁸ He originally had aspirations to use the

¹²² Example from The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Theatre Tickets’, *The Gazette*, 1 February 1964, p. 17.

¹²³ Example from The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Box Office’, *The Gazette*, 2 February 1980, p. 26.

¹²⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Partners Off-Day’, *The Gazette*, 9 September 1989, p. 763.

¹²⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Box Office’, *The Gazette*, 9 September 1989, p. 771.

¹²⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Box Office’, p. 771.

¹²⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Box Office’, p. 26.

¹²⁸ ‘The Acquisition of Odney’.

land to create a 'Partnership Village' on the site in Cookham, Berkshire, similar to Cadbury's Bournville Village and Unilever's Port Sunlight.¹²⁹ It was never built, but Odney continued to be used as a leisure property for a range of social and sporting activities as well as holidays for Partners. The property was ideally situated for the Partners of John Lewis Oxford Street and Peter Jones as the journey by "Paddington to Cookham Station and from Cookham Station by foot to the club itself takes rather less than an hour and a half".¹³⁰ By 2014, the JLP owned or had exclusive deals with five leisure properties based across England and Wales: Odney, Leckford Abbas, Brownsea Castle, Ambleside Park and Bala Lake Hotel. The most recent acquisition was the Bala Lake Hotel in Wales in 2008, which was acquired to "provide more for families with young teenagers and Partners seeking more active breaks".¹³¹ Overall, Partnership expenditure on the leisure properties was approximately 0.5 per cent of the pay sheet each year. This allowed for use of the properties by Partners to be subsidised, while ensuring their running costs.¹³² The leisure properties were also designed to fit with Spedan's philosophy of offering high quality amenities as well as the benefits of ownership. One retired Partner described his experience of visiting Odney for training after leaving school:

"I came from – where I lived at home, it was a two-up, two-down in a not exactly a deprived area, but it wasn't a well-off area and to suddenly discover you're part-owner of a country club – mind you I didn't know what a country club was to be honest. It was unbelievable. Unbelievable. To be in houses like that and – it was beyond any experience I had."¹³³

¹²⁹ 'The Acquisition of Odney'.

¹³⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Odney', *The Gazette*, 26 March 1927, p. 450.

¹³¹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Adventure Playground', *The Gazette*, 4 April 2008, p. 8.

¹³² The John Lewis Partnership, 'Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Partnership Residential Centres (Supplement)', *The Gazette*, 17 October 1992, p. 10.

¹³³ T Keith.

For all of the subsidised leisure, annual reports and updates were published in the *Gazette* for centrally managed clubs and societies, box office opportunities and the leisure properties.¹³⁴ Similarly, on a local level, reports were published in the relevant *Chronicle*. The annual reports detailed how much the club or society had earned through nominal membership fees and how much they had claimed in subsidy. The annual budgets were agreed by the Committee of Ways and Means, a sub-committee of the Central Council, who could allocate additional funds if needed for specific funding requests.¹³⁵ This was similarly duplicated at a local level through the Branch Council.

Expansion of the Partnership increased the demand for leisure as the number of Partners wanting to access schemes or facilities increased. The leisure properties, Odney and Leckford Abbas, were the first to respond to these pressures by introducing membership rates and restricting usage by part-time Partners. Until 1960, the properties had been run by their own committees, however due to increasing interest and usage from across the Partnership, the Central Council became more heavily involved.¹³⁶ In an effort to prevent overcrowding, membership for Partners who worked under twenty hours a week was stopped in 1960.¹³⁷ This

¹³⁴ Around issue 31 each year (first week of September) for example The John Lewis Partnership, *The Gazette*, 5 September 1987, pp. 731–34.

¹³⁵ Example in The John Lewis Partnership, 'Committee for Ways and Means: Report of a Meeting Held on 21 August', *The Gazette*, 30 August 1986, p. 730.

¹³⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Partnership Residential Centres (Supplement)', p. 2.

¹³⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Partnership Residential Centres (Supplement)', p. 5.

was challenged in 1977 in the Central Council but defeated by an ad hoc committee.¹³⁸

Similarly, the organisation and management of clubs and societies shifted as the JLP expanded geographically. Originally all clubs and societies that were financed by the JLP were the responsibility of the Central Council, and the rules of each club needed to be approved by either the Central Council or the Chairman.¹³⁹ In 1978, it was agreed that this would be managed locally with approval of the Head of Branch and President of the Branch Council.¹⁴⁰ These changes led to the disbandment of the Central Council's Committee for Clubs and Societies and made local clubs and societies "entirely a local responsibility, subject only to financial sanction by the Central Council".¹⁴¹ Branch councils were argued to be in a "better position to judge matters than a central committee", decentralising some of the power around leisure and spending.¹⁴²

With the attribution of responsibility to branch councils, new rules and explanatory notes were provided for the running of clubs and societies which included details of membership. Guidance stated that membership was divided between "full members" and "associate members".¹⁴³ "Full members" included "Partners who have Partnership discount cards valid for use in all branches and

¹³⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Odney Club Report', *The Gazette*, 8 October 1977, pp. 835–40.

¹³⁹ Subsidies for Leisure Activities: A Report by the Committee for Leisure Activities, 'Draft Gazette Article Circulated to Members of the Committee for Leisure Activities', 1985, John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 4251 v1.

¹⁴⁰ Subsidies for Leisure Activities: A Report by the Committee for Leisure Activities.

¹⁴¹ Subsidies for Leisure Activities: A Report by the Committee for Leisure Activities.

¹⁴² The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Central Council Meeting', *The Gazette*, 18 February 1978, p. 67.

¹⁴³ Committee for leisure activities and adults subsidies 1973-1989, 'Subsidies for Leisure Activities', 1985, John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 4251 v1.

Pensioners and others entitled to the benefits of Regulation 250(2)” which included the use of clubs and societies, so long as working Partner were prioritised and meant that they qualified for subsidy, whereas “associate members” who had “temporary house discount cards, [or were] relatives and friends of full members” did not.¹⁴⁴ Workers who were considered temporary, such as students under the age of nineteen, did not receive Partnership discount cards and would therefore, not receive subsidy.¹⁴⁵

While a leisure-focused sub-committee of the Branch Council managed clubs and societies in provincial branches, a central committee continued to look after the Partnership Clubs and Societies.¹⁴⁶ This list included clubs and societies based on a wide range of activities such as the Sabeema Art Club, Ski Club, and the Sailing Club.¹⁴⁷ The committees, both centrally and locally, were responsible for estimating annual budgets, setting membership fees, and deciding whether activities were within the Partnership’s scope to fund.¹⁴⁸ As budgets were decided annually, the clubs and societies were at risk during periods of financial difficulty, however the committee would meet to evaluate and determine a course of action. When facing budget limitations in 1992, the Committee for Leisure Activities made the decision to stop funding swimming and yoga classes because “the numbers involved were

¹⁴⁴ Committee for leisure activities and adults subsidies 1973-1989.

¹⁴⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Central Council: Summary of Proceedings on Monday 6 February’, *The Gazette*, 18 February 1984, p. 67.

¹⁴⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Partners Off-Duty’, *The Gazette*, 24 August 1985, pp. 695–98.

¹⁴⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Partners Off-Duty’, pp. 695–98.

¹⁴⁸ Committee for Clubs and Social Activities, ‘Minutes of the 1994-5 Committee’, 1985, John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 4517.

very small and the cost per head was very high”.¹⁴⁹ The cut to swimming classes was further justified because of the increased availability of swimming pools and lessons since when the classes had been started.

The central Partnership societies and clubs tended to hold their weekly or monthly meetings in a fixed location but were described as “keen to extend their activities Partnershipwide where possible” and hosted larger club weekend events at the JLP-owned residential properties to widen accessibility.¹⁵⁰ However, the accessibility of the centralised clubs and societies continued to be questioned. In a 1992 Central Council debate, the position of the Dramatic Society as a central club was queried by a councillor who argued that it was limited to London-based Partners.¹⁵¹ The Director of Personnel defended the characterisation because of the density of London-based branches, listing members from “John Lewis Oxford Street, Brent Cross, Peter Jones, Kingston and Waitrose Bracknell” and stating that Partners from other London-based Waitrose branches had also had the opportunity to join.¹⁵² The spend on ticket subsidy also encountered similar concerns as clubs and societies benefitting London-based Partners over provincial Partners. Concerns were often deflected as symptoms of a national problem with culture, with the Director of Personnel in 1992 claiming that fifty per cent ticket subsidy going to London branches “did not say much about the Partnership, but an awful lot about the cultural life of this country, which was much too London dominated”.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Committee for Leisure Activities, ‘Minutes of the 23rd Meeting of the Committee for Leisure Activities’, 1992, John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 4251 v2.

¹⁵⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Partners Off-Day’, p. 758.

¹⁵¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Central Council: Summary of Proceedings on 21 September’, *The Gazette*, 3 October 1992, p. 912.

¹⁵² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Central Council: Summary of Proceedings on 21 September’, p. 912.

¹⁵³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Central Council: Summary of Proceedings on 21 September’, p. 912.

Sally Masterman, Partnership Social Secretary, acknowledged there was a perception that the Partnership Social Secretary's Office mostly benefitted Partners based in London.¹⁵⁴ In response, Masterman set up a "leisure roadshow" to take around each branch to give Partners the opportunity to meet her and to share ideas as well as criticisms and demonstrated the demand for an "exciting and entertaining programme of events".¹⁵⁵ As part of the response to the continued concern around access, amendments were made to the standing orders of the Central Committee for Clubs and Social Activities which included formal provision for the Partnership Social Secretary to "co-ordinate the work of branch social secretaries and social committees so as to ensure a broad measure of uniformity in their activities".¹⁵⁶ This formalised the role of the social secretary that had previously "kept an eye on what branches did".¹⁵⁷ The amendment continued to allow for regional variations as needed which allowed branches to make some individual choices regarding leisure provision.¹⁵⁸

Accessibility was a common theme across the different leisure subsidies. The debate over part-time membership to Odney and Leckford had resurfaced in 1991 through a Central Council proposal which aimed to improve the "benefits for part-timers of long-service" and highlighted that "of the 37,973 Partners, only 3,168 [were] members of these two clubs" demonstrating an opportunity to extend benefits.¹⁵⁹ The Ad Hoc

¹⁵⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Leisure Roadshow', *The Gazette*, 11 June 1994, p. 496.

¹⁵⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Leisure Roadshow', p. 496.

¹⁵⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Central Council: Summary of Proceedings on 23 May, Part 1', *The Gazette*, 11 June 1994, p. 487.

¹⁵⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Central Council: Summary of Proceedings on 23 May, Part 1', pp. 487–88.

¹⁵⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Central Council: Summary of Proceedings on 23 May, Part 1', pp. 487–88.

¹⁵⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Background to the Agenda', *The Gazette*, 31 August 1991, p. 777.

Committee on Partnership residential centres in 1992 recommended changes to restrictions on membership so that Partners who worked “eight hours or more (and fewer than 20) and at least two days per week with five years’ service or more” were able to apply to weekday members of the Odney and Leckford clubs.¹⁶⁰ Weekday membership allowed Partners access from 6pm on Mondays until 6pm on Saturdays. The length of service requirement was introduced to reflect an individual’s “commitment to the business”.¹⁶¹ This aimed to prioritise usage of the clubs for full-time Partners, while providing proportional access to those who worked part-time, however questions over membership continued.

Some Partners queried the funding of activities that only benefited a limited number of Partners. In 1993, this debate arose over the Partnership Ski Club and their trips abroad. The Director of Personnel, Ian Alexander, acknowledged Partners’ concerns over the cost of subsidising their trips abroad, however he argued that this was a necessity for the activity and could not be provided by a Partnership venue.¹⁶² Alexander argued that the ski club had a “firm place in Partnership tradition, and our commitment to subsidising minority pursuits amounted to a strong case for providing some sort of continued support”.¹⁶³ Efforts were made to bring the subsidy spend closer to Partnership guidelines, but the club was safeguarded for the fear that without support it would close and Partners would cease to benefit.

¹⁶⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Partnership Residential Centres (Supplement)’, p. 5.

¹⁶¹The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Partnership Residential Centres (Supplement)’, p. 5.

¹⁶² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Subsidies for Clubs and Societies and for Adult Education’, *The Gazette*, 12 June 1993, pp. 487–88.

¹⁶³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Subsidies for Clubs and Societies and for Adult Education’, p. 489.

The support or restriction on subsidised activities reflected Spedan Lewis's intention that activities subsidised by the Partnership were to be of the highest quality and the improvement of the mind and body. However, this stance in relation to ticket subsidy came under increasing scrutiny by Partners, as described by one retired Partner:

"It couldn't be something very frivolous and that was a bone of contention because obviously too we still get subsidy on theatre tickets and things like that because a lot of people, we couldn't get any subsidy on pop concerts or anything that was deemed to be frivolous. It was supposed to be to widen your experience, to be good for you so it had to be theatre, it wasn't even cinema in my days although for a while you could get your money back – you got half of it back, if you went to theatre."¹⁶⁴

In 1995, a reader's letter to *The Gazette* asked about the relaxing of subsidies for groups of Partners when "attending 'non-art' events such as pop concerts or musicals".¹⁶⁵ The Partnership Social Secretary, Sally Masterman, responded suggesting that the Partner should speak to his local social secretary to discuss his ideas for outings, which suggested the beginnings of a shift in the Partnership's general attitude toward subsidy.

166

In 1997, restrictions around ticket subsidy were debated at Central Council and councillors discussed whether subsidy should be extended to include popular music concerts. One councillor suggested that subsidy should be available for "practically anything a Partner would enjoy going to see".¹⁶⁷ The Finance Director, Mr David Young, calculated that the cost for carrying out that proposal would equal £12.5 million which

¹⁶⁴ Interview closed to public (5), *Interview Conducted for 'From an "Experiment in Industrial Democracy" to "Driving the Difference": The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014'*, 2022, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

¹⁶⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Sir John Falstaff', *The Gazette*, 1 April 1995, section Readers' letters, p. 233.

¹⁶⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Response by S M Masterman to "Partnership Subsidy" by Sir John Falstaff', *The Gazette*, 1 April 1995, section Readers' letters, p. 233.

¹⁶⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Summary of Proceedings on 17 November, Part 2', p. 1180.

would heavily impact the Partnership Bonus.¹⁶⁸ He argued that there would be high administrative costs with no real purpose because if “Partners could be subsidised to do anything, we might as well scrap the whole scheme and put the money back into Bonus [...] In the end the subsidy had to be unashamedly elitist or it should be forgotten”.¹⁶⁹ However, continued attempts were made to widen the usage of ticket subsidy by Partners and in 1998/1999 the scheme was expanded to allow Partners to also claim subsidy for dependants to increase uptake.¹⁷⁰ Previously, some Partners had been able to claim subsidy for dependents at the discretion of the Branch Councils who argued they extended subsidy to support Partners who “would otherwise be unable to afford family trips and the subsidy was a great help to lower-paid Partners, particularly one-parent families”.¹⁷¹ This demonstrated that the level of control that individual Branch councils had and their potential to provide assistance or benefits to Partners outside of the traditional structure of the subsidised leisure schemes. However, the Committee for Clubs and Social Activities highlighted that the rule for allowing dependants to claim subsidy was not applied uniformly through all branches.¹⁷²

The subsequent expansion of ticket subsidy was reported to have been positively received with “‘feel-good’ factor riding high and a high percentage take-up by Partners, their families and dependants”.¹⁷³ The Partnership had also begun to invest in corporate memberships to widen the leisure scheme, “negotiating special ticket offers” for a range

¹⁶⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 17 November, Part 2’, p. 1180.

¹⁶⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 17 November, Part 2’, p. 1180.

¹⁷⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Change Afoot on the Partnership Leisure Scene’, *The Gazette*, 31 October 1998, pp. 992–93.

¹⁷¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings, Part 2’, *The Gazette*, 20 July 1996, p. 647.

¹⁷² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings, Part 2’, p. 647.

¹⁷³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Professional Event Qualification “on Offer” for Social Secretaries’, *The Gazette*, 30 October 1999, p. 1111.

of commercial venues, such as Alton Towers, Edinburgh Zoo and nationwide Sea Life Centres.¹⁷⁴ Further modernisation in the form of ballots for tickets of major sporting events through a ballot, “an opportunity to attend top-class sporting events at half the normal price for Partners and their dependants”.¹⁷⁵ The popularity of the ticket subsidy led to the Committee for Clubs and Social Activities requesting an increased budget for the subsidy fund in 2000.¹⁷⁶ The increase meant that the Partnership Carnival, or Gala as it had been previously known, was suspended until 2004 at the earliest to free up the funds. However, the argument was made that there “were doubts about the wisdom of holding an annual Carnival in any case when so much money was required for a single event where success depended on the state of the weather”.¹⁷⁷ In addition to postponing the Carnival, the same proposal recommended cutting the overall subsidy for individual Partners to allow for the continued subsidy of dependants, which had helped to increase the usage of scheme since its broadening in 1998/1999.¹⁷⁸ The Partnership’s shift to corporate membership and widening of the subsidy scheme demonstrated how the councils were responsive to the needs and wants of their constituents and aimed to make the schemes attractive and usable to as many Partners as possible.

While expanding ticket subsidy, other areas of the leisure subsidy became more focused. The aim of the Partnership’s social activities was re-emphasised in 1999 as intending “to bring as many working Partners together as possible”.¹⁷⁹ In so doing the

¹⁷⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Partnership Leisure Scene’, *The Gazette*, 31 October 1998, p. 995.

¹⁷⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Serving Partners’ Leisure Needs’, *The Gazette*, 16 June 2001, p. 556.

¹⁷⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report of the Committee for Clubs and Social Activities’, *The Gazette*, 2 December 2000, p. 1313.

¹⁷⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report of the Committee for Clubs and Social Activities’, p. 1313.

¹⁷⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report of the Committee for Clubs and Social Activities’, p. 1313.

¹⁷⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Partners’ Views Influence Content and Rules for next Year’s Carnival’, *The Gazette*, 30 October 1999, p. 1108.

Partnership's Committee for Clubs and Social Activities recommended that clubs and societies follow similar guidelines to that of social secretaries, by applying the "general rule [that] no more than 25 per cent of the total numbers participating in a social event should be retired Partners and their guests".¹⁸⁰ As the Partnership expanded, so did the numbers of retired Partners and this emphasis aimed to ensure that current Partners were the central beneficiaries of amenities in the Partnership and ensured that their welfare offer appealed to a new generation of Partners which would help secure job satisfaction and retention.

Despite continued Central Council discussions, the debate over membership of part-time Partners to Odney and Leckford was ultimately decided in 2000 by European Legislation which prevented the less favourable treatment of part-time employees.¹⁸¹ The debate had resurfaced in 1998 in a proposal suggested length of service be taken into account alongside the number of hours worked per week to reward the long-standing commitment of some part-time Partners to the business.¹⁸² This proposal was passed by the Central Council, swayed by arguments that part-time Partners often worked the least popular hours and that full-time Partners would retain their priority.¹⁸³ The EU legislation caused the JLP to remove the previous restrictions for part-time Partners to ensure the Partnership complied with the new legislation. The proposal brought to Central Council proposed the end to the existing restrictions but suggested that for "those joining the

¹⁸⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Partners' Views Influence Content and Rules for next Year's Carnival', p. 1108.

¹⁸¹ *The Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000*, 2000 <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2000/1551/>> [accessed 5 October 2022].

¹⁸² The John Lewis Partnership, 'Summary of Proceedings on 21 September, Part 2', *The Gazette*, 10 October 1998, p. 917.

¹⁸³ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Summary of Proceedings on 21 September, Part 2', pp. 917–19.

Partnership from 28 January 2001, that the qualifying period for Partnership service for entitlement to the use of the Partnership's residential centres and Winter Hill Golf Club shall be three years".¹⁸⁴ While ultimately accepted, the debate raised the issue of removing discrimination against one group, part-time Partners, and instating it for another, new Partners.¹⁸⁵ As with previous debates surrounding use of the leisure properties, the central concern was over-subscription which directed the Councillors' to require a qualifying service period, however it was noted that the length of the period could be discussed in another session of Council.¹⁸⁶

Other legislative changes, such as those made to the laws around Sunday trading, also impacted use and engagement with the Partnership's leisure schemes, which will be explored in-depth in chapter five to examine the impact of debates on seven-day trading on ideas of co-ownership in the JLP. The changes to investment in ticket subsidy and expanding the scheme to include dependants gave Partners more opportunities to use the leisure schemes outside of the Partnership, on days that fit their work schedule and with their own families, rather than with fellow Partners. However, this followed a similar trend in leisure across industries as work and life became increasingly separate.

While the JLP offered a wide range of welfare and amenities that Partners could choose to participate in, some Partners chose not to engage. An interviewee described not participating in clubs and societies of the JLP because they already had enough

¹⁸⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Summary of Proceedings on 20 November, Part 2', *The Gazette*, 9 December 2000, p. 1346.

¹⁸⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Summary of Proceedings on 20 November, Part 2', p. 1347.

¹⁸⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Summary of Proceedings on 20 November, Part 2', p. 1348.

infrastructure in their social life.¹⁸⁷ Others pushed back against a Partnership social life more vehemently: “When a friend of mine casually asked a Waitrose Partner if she was going to the Southern Spectacular on Saturday she replied that no, she had a life, implying, I suppose that those of us going, didn’t”.¹⁸⁸ Attempts were made to reach more Partners such as the leisure roadshows organised by the Partnership Social Secretaries, but not all Partners wanted to be engaged with this element of the JLP.

However, research into ‘organisational justice’, or how employees perceive fairness in the workplace, found that “employees genuinely care about how a benefits policy is applied to other people, even when there is no direct benefit to advantage themselves”, suggesting that simply having visible benefits was important to employees’ perceptions of fairness.¹⁸⁹ The findings of the 1968 research project, *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, found similarly when surveying Partners on the JLP’s leisure facilities. Flanders et al. reported that:

“respondents were asked whether they would be sorry in the Partnership stopped providing leisure facilities. Most people said that they would be sorry, but so many added the qualification that was on account of the loss to others, because they themselves did not make use of the amenities”.¹⁹⁰

Therefore, the leisure provision for Partners within the JLP was shown to have some impact indirectly through the perception of ‘fairness’ and availability amongst other members of the Partnership.

¹⁸⁷ K Temple, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”’: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2022, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

¹⁸⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Party Animal’, *The Gazette*, 29 November 1997, section Readers’ letters, p. 1165.

¹⁸⁹ Melinda Laundon, Abby Cathcart, and Paula McDonald, ‘Just Benefits? Employee Benefits and Organisational Justice’, *Employee Relations: The International Journal*, 41.4 (2019), pp. 708–23 (p. 720).

¹⁹⁰ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 111.

The examination of subsidised leisure highlights questions around the terms of membership of Partners to the JLP during periods of expansion as the numbers of Partners and their geographic spread increased dramatically. Access to leisure depended, at least partly, on location, as well as demand. As private leisure became more accessible, the Partnership struggled to meet the demands of Partners while maintaining their 'Partnership difference' in terms of quality and perceived benefit on Partner well-being. However, the provision of leisure and amenities continued to shape the experiences of Partners in the business.

3.5 Conclusion

The movement to improve welfare for employees in the retail industry demonstrate that while the Partnership was not unique in its efforts, the ownership structure did alter the dynamic. Concerns were expressed by Partners over the expenditure of amenities, where money could otherwise be invested into the business. One Partner queried the JLP's slow start to the financial year in 1975 compared to competitor Debenhams, asking "We wonder whether this is the result of the Chairman spending too much on amenity matters and the "image" as opposed to the trading scene".¹⁹¹ The Chairman, Peter Lewis, rebutted, asking where money would come from to invest in "things which cannot be supported by their own commercial revenue", such as "music, the theatre, medical research, welfare, the sick and the elderly, our architectural heritage, conservation and so on", if the Partnership did not offer some financial support.¹⁹² The attitude of the

¹⁹¹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by C A M', *The Gazette*, 29 May 1976, section Readers' letters, p. 388.

¹⁹² The John Lewis Partnership, 'Response by Peter Lewis to "Business Principles" by C A M', *The Gazette*, 29 May 1976, section Readers' letters, p. 388.

Chairman, Peter Lewis, portrayed the feeling of responsibility inherent in the JLP, linked strongly to the ethos of the business and paternalistic approach.

The role of paternalism in the provision of welfare and amenities was no doubt linked with industrial relations. However, the JLP used provision to serve multiple functions: The Partnership used its welfare programme to support Partners in need, build loyalty, which was reflected in retention, and to promote its reputation as a compassionate employer which supported recruitment efforts. While instigated by Spedan Lewis, the administration of the programme was Partner-led and seen as an important part of the democratic structure of the business. Charitable giving contributed to the JLP's reputation locally and allowed Partners to make impactful contributions to their local communities. Traditional paternalism provided a framework for the provision of subsidies for activities, however the administration of these activities through the committees of Central and Branch councils and the protection of funding within the constitution situated Partners as the key organisers and beneficiaries within this framework.

4 Membership and Loyalty

4.1 Introduction

The rules and regulations of the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) stated that “Every member of the Partnership has complete freedom to belong to a trade union”.¹ If a conflict of interests arose between membership of the Partnership and membership of a trade union, “those concerned must remember the special obligations which they have to their Partners”.² While a large number of Partners were not unionised, some areas of the Partnership contained concentrated union membership, for example in transport, service and manufacturing.³ Hence, membership to both a trade union and the Partnership raised questions about the loyalty of Partners and the risk that conflicting memberships posed to the business.

This chapter examines the Partnership’s relationship with trade unionism, key discourse surrounding industrial relations in the postwar period and how Partnership institutions were used to navigate this contested landscape. As the industrial landscape of Britain shifted, the labour policies of the subsequent governments of Harold Wilson, Edward Heath, and James Callaghan, were particularly interested in the impact of industrial relations, commissioning a number of investigations, and introducing new legislation. As an employer of over five-thousand people, the JLP was implicated by many of the resulting recommendations and legal procedures. This chapter examines how the

¹ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 32.

² The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 32.

³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Branch Councils and Industrial Disputes’, 1975, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2532/k Industrial Disputes.

Partnership responded to proposals which demonstrated how senior management saw the Partnership model and its position within wider political discourse. Many of the proposals were discussed at Central Council or were raised within the Readers' Letters section of *The Gazette* allowing insight to the views of the broader Partnership. Finally, this chapter reflects on how institutions of the JLP, such as the Committees for Communications, Branch Councils, and the Registry, worked to raise and alleviate issues at branch level as a method of improving industrial relations through employee involvement at a local level.

4.2 The Partnership and trade unionism

In 1939, an issue of the *Gazette* reported that some of the John Lewis Partnership drivers had approached the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) with a view to joining.⁴ The *Gazette* reported that the drivers could join the union as the JLP's aims aligned with TGWU's.⁵ However, if the drivers participated in any strike action, they "might have Partnership privileges withdrawn" as it would detrimentally affect others within the Partnership.⁶ When some drivers asked again in 1948, the founder, John Spedan Lewis, acquiesced so long as a secret ballot was held among the drivers.⁷ The ballot resulted in the drivers joining the union which Spedan Lewis accepted.

⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Work: The Partnership and the Trade Unions', *The Gazette*, 25 February 1939, pp. 91–92.

⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Work: The Partnership and the Trade Unions', pp. 91–92.

⁶ Cox, p. 111.

⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Joint Conciliation Committee of John Lewis and Company, Ltd., and the Transport and General Workers' Union', *The Gazette*, 10 July 1948, p. 262.

The Partnership's position towards union membership and industrial action was described in terms of co-ownership. Spedan Lewis argued that while Partners might feel inclined to go on strike against the Partnership, they were in-fact striking against their fellow-workers as "there will be no-one else against whom they can strike, for the whole of the profit would go to them and to those fellow-workers and they must accordingly be the only losers".⁸ The emphasis on the responsibilities of Partners as co-owners of the business continued to be stressed in the rhetoric of the subsequent chairman. In response to letters in the *Gazette* senior management often argued the balance between the responsibilities and benefits of co-ownership, for example, Bernard Miller wrote in response to one Partner querying pay and working hours that:

"This letter shows no consciousness of any duty of the Partnership toward its customers. It is a measure of how far the Partnership has still to go before its members understand that they are the owners of the business in which they work and that in return for sharing among themselves all of the benefits of ownership they must shoulder the responsibilities also".⁹

It was this reasoning, also demonstrated in the Partnership's Rules and Regulations, that senior management used to argue against the membership of groups of Partners into different unions, as it would help their own group interests, rather than that of the Partners belonging to a wider Partnership.¹⁰

The founder made his thoughts on industrial action and the Partnership clear in his 1948 book, *Partnership for All*. Spedan suggested the "obligations of union membership as on a footing with sickness" and that the Partnership would "tolerate an infrequent

⁸ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 290.

⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Response by O.B.M to "Hours of Work" by Wistfull', *The Gazette*, 6 June 1964, section Readers' letters, p. 460.

¹⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Branch Councils and Industrial Disputes'.

absence” which would demonstrate the JLP to be a tolerant employer that gives a “feeling of safety and increases [Partners] own inclination to stay in the Partnership and do their best”.¹¹ However, if a Partner went on strike without proper notice then Spedan suggested that the Partner would have to make their case to the Central Council and then Councillors would decide by secret ballot whether the Partner would be retained.¹² Spedan saw the breaking of the law through not giving proper notice as a “game at which two can play” and offered the example of “[...] Hitler’s gangsters who persuaded others to break the law. In the end the will of those gangsters replaced in Germany all law and order”.¹³ Ultimately, Spedan Lewis determined the objective of the Partnership was “the evolution of a new social organism, an efficient self-governing community” where all were “free to leave whenever they like, just as any Briton can become a citizen of another country if he likes”.¹⁴ This attitude stressed that if Partners did not like the way the Partnership was being run then they could leave.

While demonstrating limited support of strike action, Spedan Lewis recognised the work of trade unions, but argued that trade unionism and consumer-cooperation faced similar problems in the construction of their democratic systems which inhibited the organisations from developing successful profit-seeking businesses across sectors and that the model of the JLP could be the solution.¹⁵ Spedan Lewis highlighted cases in the United States that he felt held promise for the future of trade unionism involving financing research into “the technique of production with a view to helping employers increase their

¹¹ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 291.

¹² John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, pp. 293–94.

¹³ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, pp. 293–94.

¹⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘To My Fellow-Employees of Peter Jones, Ltd.’, *The Gazette*, 16 March 1918, p. 4.

¹⁵ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, pp. 184–85.

own ability to give good pay to their employees”, attempting to establish a symbiotic relationship between the trade unions, employers and employees.¹⁶ Spedan Lewis argued that “Genuine partnership for all ought of course to mean that workers of every kind get in one way or another more than any union could get for them, for they will be getting in way or another the whole of the profit”.¹⁷ Therefore, he thought that Partners should have no need to join a union, unless they felt a duty to do so or as insurance in case they decided to leave the JLP and seek other employment.¹⁸

Overall, most areas of the Partnership were not unionised. However, unions did have an impact on some elements of Partnership life. For example, trade unions were influential in determining wage rates for some occupations, and many of the craftsmen employed by the JLP were benefitted from the unions’ impact on market rates.¹⁹ It was the responsibility of the Chief Registrar to ensure that the Partnership’s rule and regulations, constitution and system were maintained in accordance with the law which included “the fulfilment of obligations under any Wages Council Order or trade agreement”.²⁰ In addition, the JLP actively engaged with debates over industrial relations, co-partnership and common ownership, sending representatives to conferences and publishing extracts of reports in *The Gazette* that senior management and editors thought would be of interest to the wider Partnership.²¹

¹⁶ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 185.

¹⁷ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 192.

¹⁸ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 186.

¹⁹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 100.

²⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 54.

²¹ For example, The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Co-Partnership in Europe’, *The Gazette*, 25 March 1972, pp. 182–83; The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Experiments in Participation’, 15 January 1972, pp. 1300–1301.

4.3 Donovan, In Place of Strife & an Experiment in Industrial Democracy

Through the 1950s and into the early 1960s, there was a dramatic rise in living standards for Britons with wages rising by seventy-two per cent between 1951 to 1963.²² However, when compared to competing nations, Britain was seen as falling behind with only 2.8 per cent growth in rate of total annual output in the 1960s compared to “4.8 per cent in Germany and 6 per cent in France”.²³ Britain’s economy had grown at a slower rate and there had been a drop in the percentage of manufactured exports from 25.5 per cent in 1950 to 11 per cent by the end of the 1960s.²⁴ As economic trends caused political concern to grow, trade unions were increasingly looked at as a key factor as a result of rising numbers of unofficial strikes and income policies.²⁵ Since the end of the Second World War, governments had “promoted a form of industrial self-government” where the state did not interfere with union affairs, where possible.²⁶ However, where industry had become dominated by large private and public sector organisations, causing the physical gap between the management and the shopfloor to grow and power to become more centralised, workplaces had become increasingly unionised which pushed industrial relations to be prioritised on political agendas.²⁷

²² Tara Martin López, *The Winter of Discontent: Myth, Memory, and History* (Liverpool University Press, 2014), p. 27.

²³ John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, ‘The High Tide of Trade Unionism: Mapping Industrial Politics 1964-79’, in *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism?: Trade Unions and Industrial Politics*, ed. by John McIlroy, Nina Fishman, and Alan Campbell (Merlin, 2007), pp. 93–132 (p. 94).

²⁴ Peter Dorey, *Comrades in Conflict* (Manchester University Press, 2019), p. 10.

²⁵ McIlroy and Campbell, p. 94.

²⁶ Dorey, p. 9.

²⁷ Dorey, p. 12.

As part of centenary celebrations, the JLP was considering its position within the field of industrial relations and its contribution to the broader political debate. In 1962, the Chairman, Bernard Miller, placed an advert in the press to call for researchers to take part in a social research project to investigate the Partnership institutions and the meaning of the Partnership to Partners.²⁸ Later that year, Miller announced in *The Gazette* that the Partnership had secured Allan Flanders, Senior Lecturer in Industrial Relations at University of Oxford, and Joan Woodward, Senior Lecturer in Industrial Sociology at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, University of London, as the Directors of the project.²⁹ Ruth Pomeranz was announced as lead of the research team due to her experience in the field of industrial research and work with the *Economist* Intelligence Unit.³⁰ The directors of the project, Flanders and Woodward, were well established in the field of industrial relations which had increasingly become part of the “institutional fabric of the university sector”.³¹ The involvement of these experts in the field of industrial relations in the Partnership research project demonstrated the belief and the commitment of the JLP to their model of working as a solution to some of the prominent issues facing businesses and the economy in 1960s.

The findings of the research project were reported back to the wider Partnership through reports in *The Gazette*, culminating in the publication of the book, *Experiment in Industrial Democracy* in 1968 which provided full details of the project and findings. The findings were broken down into considerations of the JLP’s aspirations: the sharing of

²⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘John Lewis Centenary, 1964’, *The Gazette*, 23 June 1962, p. 515.

²⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Partnership Research Project’, *The Gazette*, 27 October 1962, p. 963.

³⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Partnership Research Project’, p. 963.

³¹ Roger Seifert, ‘Big Bangs and Cold Wars: The British Industrial Relations Tradition after Donovan (1965-2015)’, *Employee Relations*, 37.6 (2015), pp. 746–60 (p. 747).

gain, knowledge, and power. Flanders et al. praised the system for the sharing of gain as profits could be shared fully with those in the business without interferences as there were no external interests to appease.³² They similarly agreed that the sharing of knowledge through the promotion of free speech was “cultivated and protected [...] to a degree that is not customary in most business organizations”.³³ However, Flanders et al., argued that the democratic systems, through which power was shared, were representative of the management over the non-management Partners, even at a local level in Branch Councils. They acknowledged the composition of Committee for Communications as wholly non-management Partners but identified their function as to “enquire, discuss and suggest” rather than as a mode of power sharing.³⁴ Overall, Flanders et al. argued that the ideology of the Partnership was paternalistic as while Partners were encouraged to hold management to account through democratic bodies, the idea that management knew what was best for Partners was reinforced through various safeguards and therefore limited the overall impact of the democratic system.

Both Flanders and Woodward were also commissioned separately to contribute to national investigations of industrial relations as inflation steadily rose and trade unionism and informal strike action were argued to be the cause, leading the government of Harold Wilson to launch a commission in an attempt to understand and solve the problem.³⁵ The Donovan Royal Commission was set up in 1965 to examine relationships between management, employees, trade unions and employers’ associations, how members’ interests were promoted and how the “social and economic advance of the nation” could

³² Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 185.

³³ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 186.

³⁴ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 187.

³⁵ Martin López, p. 36.

be accelerated, with particular interest in the Law pertaining to these factors.³⁶ The Commission held an open invitation for written evidence directed by a list of questions, oral hearings, and site visits.³⁷ Both Woodward and Flanders submitted evidence to the Donovan Commission on their respective research in industrial relations,³⁸ with Flanders credited as heavily influencing the Commission's overall findings.³⁹ In addition, the JLP also provided written evidence to the commission due to its "particular character and experience" which could be applied generally.⁴⁰

The submission from the JLP argued that their results from fifty years of worker ownership and profit sharing demonstrated that a "fairer sharing of rewards and responsibilities with industry conduces both to greater efficiency and to the greater happiness of those who work in it".⁴¹ They suggested that by following the example of the JLP and the model of collaboration between trade unions and management as in the United States of America, trade unions could campaign for the obtainment of worker membership rights to include a share of profit and responsibility, stating that "such a reorientation would provide trade unions with a wider and more positive role in our industrial life than they have at present".⁴² The submission surmised that the system of

³⁶ William Brown, 'The Donovan Report as Evidence-based Policy', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 50.5–6 (2019), pp. 419–30 (p. 419).

³⁷ Brown, p. 419.

³⁸ Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, 'Miss Joan Woodward', 1965, The National Archives, LAB 28/9/259; Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, 'Mr Allan Flanders [PM/62]', 1965, The National Archives, LAB 28/12/333.

³⁹ Sid Kessler and Gill Palmer, 'The Commission on Industrial Relations in Britain 1969-74: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation', *Employee Relations*, 18.4 (1996), pp. 6–96 (p. 8).

⁴⁰ 'Submission by the John Lewis Partnership Ltd Relating to the System of Worker-Ownership and Profit Sharing', 1965, The National Archives, LAB 28/132.

⁴¹ Donovan Report Industrial Relations/Trade Unions, 'Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations: Evidence of the John Lewis Partnership', 1965, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 4344/c.

⁴² Donovan Report Industrial Relations/Trade Unions.

co-partnership and worker ownership employed by the JLP contributed to both the economic and social advance of the nation through employment in a successful system and in the development of citizens in a political democracy, therefore offering a valid and workable model within the remit of the commission.⁴³

The findings of the Commission were published in the Donovan Report which argued that there were two systems of industrial relations in Britain: formal and informal.⁴⁴ The ‘formal’ system bound employers and trade unions in nationwide agreements, compared to the ‘informal’ which was determined at a more local level by shop stewards and managers.⁴⁵ The report found that the ‘informal’ were often predominant which led to gaps between “national agreed rates of pay and actual earnings” and conflict between the two systems.⁴⁶ While some in government hoped the report would go further by recommending the use of legislation to improve the organisation and structure of trade unions and wage-bargaining, findings remained cautious.⁴⁷ The report “broadly accepted the *status quo*” and backed an extension of collective bargaining based on voluntarism, rather than legislation.⁴⁸ The main proposals of the Report included: the registration of collective agreements with the Department of Employment and Productivity for companies who employed over five thousand people to be outlined in an Industrial Relations Act, the establishment of an Industrial Relations Commission to examine agreements, and the expansion of factory-wide collective agreements rather than national

⁴³ Donovan Report Industrial Relations/Trade Unions.

⁴⁴ Martin López, p. 36.

⁴⁵ Martin López, p. 36.

⁴⁶ W. Hamish Fraser, *A History of British Trade Unionism 1700-1998* (Macmillan, 1999), p. 217.

⁴⁷ Dorey, p. 35.

⁴⁸ Andrew Thorpe, ‘The Labour Party and Trade Unions’, in *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism?: Trade Unions and Industrial Politics*, ed. by John McIlroy, Nina Fishman, and Alan Campbell (Merlin, 2007), pp. 93–132 (p. 138).

or industry-wide.⁴⁹ In addition, the Report recommended that company boards develop effective machinery for collective bargaining and clearer procedures around grievances and unfair dismissals. Recommendations toward trade unions focused on mergers so that each industry would have only one to two unions where possible.⁵⁰

The government published their response in the White Paper, *In Place of Strife*, which accepted the findings and many of the recommendations of the Commission.⁵¹ Following its publication a small team of senior JLP management, coined the 'Donovan Committee', researched and presented a paper to the Chairman with guidance and recommendations on the Partnership's position.⁵² The committee first reported to the Chairman in March 1969, stating the Partnership's position as an employer of over 5000 people and suggesting that the JLP register voluntarily with the Department of Employment and Productivity with details of their proceedings regarding terms and conditions of employment, settlement of grievances and disputes, and consultations.⁵³ However, the Committee reasoned that the JLP's proceedings were likely to be deemed insufficient in terms of collective bargaining due to the conclusions of the research project, *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, as members of the of the new Industrial Relations Commission included Allan Flanders, one of the directors of the JLP project, as well as Mr. A. W. Allen, General Secretary of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW).⁵⁴ If the government pressured the retail industry to unionise, many retail

⁴⁹ Dorey, pp. 37–38.

⁵⁰ Dorey, pp. 37–38.

⁵¹ Kessler and Palmer, p. 10.

⁵² P May and others, 'Donovan Report and White Paper "In Place of Strife": Registration with Commission on Industrial Relations', 1969, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 4344/c.

⁵³ May and others.

⁵⁴ May and others.

workers, and therefore Partners, would likely join USDAW which would lead to the recognition of USDAW by the JLP and a growth in USDAW's membership.⁵⁵ The Committee proposed an alternative option of collective bargaining without union representation, but argued that "The individual Partner is unlikely to be informed and strong enough to bargain in the sense with management himself".⁵⁶

In response the Chairman, Bernard Miller, suggested that the Partnership should create its own trade union which could be registered with the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and which all rank and file Partners would be invited to join.⁵⁷ This led to further investigation by the Committee, who concluded that "house unions" were a "much criticised institution" and that to meet the minimum requirements to form a trade union, the union would need to be separate from the JLP, employ officials who were not Partners and be funded by Partners themselves.⁵⁸ The Committee ultimately argued that if a system of domestic unionism was introduced that the Partnership would "lose its essential character" and should instead focus on its own philosophy, systems and attitude.⁵⁹

Alongside discussions at senior management level, questions over the Partnership's systems were raised at the Central Council as part of discussions of the findings of the research project following its publication as *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*. The Central Council debate, held in October 1968, examined the publication's key findings, and allowed Councillors to share their feedback on the project.

⁵⁵ May and others.

⁵⁶ May and others.

⁵⁷ 'Donovan Report and White Paper "In Place of Strife"', 1969, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 4344/c.

⁵⁸ 'Industrial Relations: Donovan Report and White Paper "In Place of Strife"', 1969, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 4344/c.

⁵⁹ 'Industrial Relations: Donovan Report and White Paper "In Place of Strife"'.

Some Councillors criticised the scope and methodology of the project as being too narrow, ignoring the middling levels of the democracy. One councillor argued that while researchers had attempted to understand “how far the ideas of the Founder had seeped down from the top to the bottom. They had gone about it in a funny way”.⁶⁰ He argued that the researchers had “failed, as clever people so often did, to understand what went on in the mind of the not terribly clever person at the bottom” and that they had carefully selected rank and file participants to be “only of those who contact with the top was the remotest possible” and was therefore not representative.⁶¹ Another councillor stated that while “management influence was predominant”, it was because “rank and file Partners who took an active interest in the democratic side of the Partnership tended automatically to come to the top like cream and would often themselves become department managers”.⁶²

Councillors who had been elected from the rank and file welcomed the debate, sharing their experiences of standing for election and balancing their duties. Councillors from the rank and file raised issues which included lack of knowledge about the democratic system prior to standing for election, concerns over time spent away from their shopfloor duties, and that their participation, to some degree, depended on the “goodwill” of their Department Manager.⁶³ A councillor from John Lewis, Oxford Street, described the difficulty of getting Partners to vote for a rank and file Partners as they

⁶⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Central Council Meeting: Summary of Proceedings on Monday 14th October 1968’, *The Gazette*, 26 October 1968, p. 1014.

⁶¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Central Council Meeting: Summary of Proceedings on Monday 14th October 1968’, p. 1014.

⁶² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Central Council Meeting: Summary of Proceedings on Monday 14th October 1968’, p. 1015.

⁶³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Central Council Meeting: Summary of Proceedings on Monday 14th October 1968’, pp. 1015–16.

tended to be less well-known across the branch compared to Department Managers, stating that “Partners tended to tick off the names they knew and a rank and file Partner stood no chance unless he went round and canvassed Partners”.⁶⁴ While some councillors shared some of the same concerns as the researchers, the concluding remarks of the debate, made by Mr Hamilton of George Henry Lee, criticised the equating of “accountability” with the sharing of power.⁶⁵ In response, Mr Hamilton proposed that “this should be thoroughly examined by experts of the Partnership” which led to the appointment of the Committee on Sharing of Power.⁶⁶

The Committee comprised of eight Partners, three of which were appointed by the Chairman and five by the President of the Central Council.⁶⁷ They met fourteen times between January and June of 1969 before presenting their final report and publishing findings in *The Gazette* in July 1969. The committee engaged with a wide range of evidence including the White Paper, *In Place of Strife*, letters published in *The Gazette*, and academic literature.⁶⁸ While the committee had also called for written or oral evidence from Partners, they had found that there had been “no queue of Partners anxious to express their views” and only received eight contributions from Partners outside of the committee.⁶⁹ This led the committee to conclude that “the majority of Partners are not so much concerned with a greater sharing in decision making and the responsibility that

⁶⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Central Council Meeting: Summary of Proceedings on Monday 14th October 1968’, p. 1016.

⁶⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Central Council Meeting: Summary of Proceedings on Monday 14th October 1968’, pp. 1017–18.

⁶⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Central Council Meeting: Summary of Proceedings on Monday 14th October 1968’, pp. 1017–18.

⁶⁷ ‘Minute Book of the Special Committee Appointed to Consider Sharing of Power’, 1969, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 1099.

⁶⁸ As featured in the ‘Minute Book of the Special Committee Appointed to Consider Sharing of Power’; ‘Power: Sharing of, Committee 1968-1971’, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2060/xx.

⁶⁹ ‘Report of the Committee on Sharing Power’, 1969, p. 3, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2060/xxxvi(f).

necessarily goes with that sharing, as with being kept fully informed [...] and having the means and the right to have their views considered”.⁷⁰ The recommendations and suggestions of the committee therefore worked to extend the flow of information around key decisions involving Partners, rather than any large scale reform.

The report of the committee divided the operations of the Partnership into two levels: branch and central. At branch level, they considered the role of department managers, branch councils, dining room committees, committees for communication, committee for claims and suggested that some branches had found it useful to instigate an informal committee for department and section managers to meet with the Head of Branch.⁷¹ Recommendations aimed at Branch Councils looked to keep the membership of *ex-officio* members to a minimum, allow councillors to consider and be briefed on topics that arose at Central Council for discussion at branch level and allocate time in the agenda for informal questions.⁷² It was suggested that the role of the registrar would become more embedded in the democratic system in branch as *ex-officio* members of Committees for Claims and as support for Branch Councils in fact-finding.⁷³ The Committee also emphasised that training programmes for councils should emphasise the “scope of existing powers of Branch Councils”.⁷⁴

Centrally, they examined the split the of Central Council between elected representatives and *ex-officio* members, representation at Board level, and the roles of

⁷⁰ ‘Report of the Committee on Sharing Power’, p. 3.

⁷¹ ‘Report of the Committee on Sharing Power’, pp. 4–6.

⁷² ‘Report of the Committee on Sharing Power’, p. 15.

⁷³ ‘Report of the Committee on Sharing Power’, p. 15.

⁷⁴ ‘Report of the Committee on Sharing Power’, p. 15.

both the Central Council and the chairman.⁷⁵ Two of the recommendations suggested constitutional change for the JLP so that the chairman's annual report to the Central Council would become a requirement and to alter the split between elected representatives and *ex-officio* members.⁷⁶ The committee argued that *ex-officio* membership should be no more than one fifth of the membership of the Central Council to increase representation amongst the elected representative. They reasoned that while *ex-officio* membership could be up to one-third of membership, that fraction was usually not reached.⁷⁷ Changes were also recommended to the composition of the Central Board, so that the chairman would nominate five executive members and Central Council would also nominate five members of its choice.⁷⁸ In addition, while the chairman retained the right to refuse Central Council recommendations, the committee argued that the chairman should first have to consult with either the trustees of the constitution or the Central Board.⁷⁹ Overall, the committee made twenty-five recommendations or suggestions to improve the sharing of power, within the committee's terms, as well as some additional comments.⁸⁰ These recommendations aimed to counter criticisms of deficiencies in power sharing by formalising accountability procedures and increasing the number of democratically elected positions.

The Report from the Committee on Sharing Power was discussed at Central Council on 17th November 1969, with some of the recommendations already voluntarily implemented by the chairman. In one of the first debates of the meeting, a motion was

⁷⁵ 'Report of the Committee on Sharing Power', pp. 6–10.

⁷⁶ 'Report of the Committee on Sharing Power', p. 14.

⁷⁷ 'Report of the Committee on Sharing Power', p. 6.

⁷⁸ 'Report of the Committee on Sharing Power', p. 14.

⁷⁹ 'Report of the Committee on Sharing Power', p. 14.

⁸⁰ 'Report of the Committee on Sharing Power', pp. 14–17.

proposed to express regret at a decision the chairman had made to refuse a proposal surrounding payment and extra days over the Christmas period. However, while some councillors were displeased, Mr J C Stott highlighted that the chairman had first consulted the Central Board prior to refusal and the relevant minutes had been published in *The Gazette*, demonstrating the chairman's commitment to findings of the Committee on Sharing Power.⁸¹ Mr Stott continued to argue the function of the Central Council as a body to recommend solutions, as "the Council had not the knowledge to look at either problem or solution in perspective. That was the management's job", indicating that the sharing of power through the Central Council continued to be limited as an advisory body.⁸² The Director of Personnel echoed this sentiment, arguing the difference between the Partnership system and Trade Unions, stating "Councillors must consider the total effect of their decisions, the cost of them, the timing of them. If they wanted more power, they had got to be responsible in the wielding of it".⁸³

The discussions in government, informed by the Donovan commission and subsequent policy papers, led to changes in the JLP's democracy as they acted to preempt legislation and responded to internal and external feedback. Meanwhile, the government was facing difficulties turning the white paper, *In Place of Strife*, into law. The proposals made in the white paper such as the penal clauses and balloting union members prior to strike action, placed further strain on the relationship between the Labour administration and the unions.⁸⁴ The TUC opposed the Labour Government's

⁸¹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'From the Public Gallery', *The Gazette*, 29 November 1969, p. 1130.

⁸² The John Lewis Partnership, 'From the Public Gallery', p. 1130.

⁸³ The John Lewis Partnership, 'From the Public Gallery', p. 1130.

⁸⁴ Martin López, p. 36.

White Paper, along with the Home Secretary, James Callaghan.⁸⁵ In addition, at the time of publication of *In Place of Strife*, there had been a series of unofficial strikes which “led to calls for immediate action to curb the power of the unions” and proposals by the Conservative Party in their paper, *A Fair Deal at Work*, went further than *In Place of Strife* to propose legislative changes that would make unofficial strikes illegal.⁸⁶ These factors led Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, and Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity, Barbara Castle, to introduce a short Industrial Relations Bill in the spring of 1969. This was introduced in an attempt to convince trade unions of the governmental reforms and to enhance Labour’s chances of re-election as the party who could tackle industrial disruption but this caused to further tensions with trade unions.⁸⁷ In June 1970, Wilson called a General Election following an “improved performance” in local elections and timed to pre-empt any backlash from decimalisation that was to be introduced in early 1971.⁸⁸ However, the Conservative Party won the election and the controversy surrounding both the White Paper and the Industrial Relations Bill have been argued to be a cause for Labour’s loss of the 1970 election.⁸⁹

Similar to the Wilson Government, the incoming Heath Government saw industrial relations as key to tackling inflation.⁹⁰ The Conservative Party had published their answer to the problem of industrial relations in *Fair Deal at Work* three months before the

⁸⁵ Martin López, p. 37.

⁸⁶ Richard Tyler, “Victims of Our History?” Barbara Castle and *In Place of Strife*, *Contemporary British History*, 20.3 (2006), pp. 461–76 (p. 467).

⁸⁷ Dorey, pp. 90–91.

⁸⁸ Dorey, p. 189.

⁸⁹ Dorey, p. 191.

⁹⁰ Martin López, p. 38.

Donovan Commission published its findings.⁹¹ The paper argued for a reform of the collective bargaining system to ensure agreements were kept, enable more co-operation between unions and management, remove barriers to industrial efficiency, and provide protection to individual workers, through legislative changes.⁹² Following their election, the Conservative Government swiftly introduced reforms through the Industrial Relations Act 1971. The Bill exerted “closer legal control over trade union activities and other aspects of management-employee relationships” through a code of practice, increased power of Industrial Tribunals and the introduction of a National Industrial Relations Court to hear cases arising from the Act.⁹³ Employers were able to claim compensation in the event of ‘unfair’ industrial action, where insufficient notice was provided or where the action had not been called by a registered union.⁹⁴ The Act also legislated against ‘closed shops’ but allowed for an ‘agency shop’ which could be set up between an employer and union where “every worker must join the union, or pay the union subscription without become a member or pay to charity a sum equal to the union dues”.⁹⁵

As the Government legislated on industrial relations, the Partnership continued to make changes to its democratic institutions based on the feedback of the committees and findings of the research project. In his 1971 Chairman’s Address, Sir Bernard Miller summarised the most prominent points of change for Partners which included the empowerment of the Central Board to become the “ultimate controller of all the

⁹¹ B. C. Roberts, ‘Fair Deal at Work’, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 6.3 (1968), pp. 360–63 (p. 360).

⁹² Roberts, p. 360.

⁹³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘For Better or Worse? The Industrial Relations Bill’, *The Gazette*, 9 January 1971, p. 1205.

⁹⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘For Better or Worse? The Industrial Relations Bill’, p. 1205.

⁹⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘For Better or Worse? The Industrial Relations Bill’, p. 1205.

Partnership's financial operation – revenue and capital alike” and amending the rules and regulations so that the Central Council could remove an unsatisfactory chairman with a two-third majority.⁹⁶ Additionally Central Councillors would not be required to provide a case for doing so to offer legal protection for the Partnership and councillors involved. The chairman stated that the changes “make possible a substantial growth in the share that Partners can take through the representative institutions [...] The extent of which they use it is up to them”.⁹⁷ The chairman stressed that as the Industrial Relations Bill continued through Parliament that the Central Council would have a major role to play in examining the relations of the Partnership.⁹⁸

Despite continued national interest in industrial relations and participation, the chairman, Sir Bernard Miller, still described the system of partnership in the JLP as the “odd man out”, and “in some degree suspect” in his address of 1972.⁹⁹ When asked to expand on his answer in the subsequent debate, Miller argued that the three parties involved, employers, workers, and the government, were not interested in the Partnership model. He stated that as far as the government was concerned, the JLP had “done all in our power to apprise them of the significance of the Partnership”, but that employers were not interested in handing equity shares to employees while inflation continued to be a challenge.¹⁰⁰ Trade unions were equally uninterested because the JLP system was based

⁹⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report on the Partnership’, *The Gazette*, 22 May 1971, p. 383.

⁹⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report on the Partnership’, p. 383.

⁹⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report on the Partnership’, p. 383.

⁹⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report on the Partnership’, *The Gazette*, 20 May 1972, p. 395.

¹⁰⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Debate on the Chairman’s Report’, *The Gazette*, 20 May 1972, p. 397.

on internal relations, rather than external, to deal with issues between managed and management which would make their role redundant.

While participation in industry continued to be a popular concept, the interpretation of 'participation' continued to be divisive between senior management teams, trade unionists, and leaders of the Industrial Co-Partnership Association.¹⁰¹ Commenting on the politics of 'participation' as the guest at the Central Council dinner in 1973, Jeremy Thorpe, MP, and then leader of the Liberal Party, stated "I think the other two Parties in the State have persisted in regarding industry and business as theatres of war rather than fields of co-operation", as demonstrated by continued strike action.¹⁰²

There was an appetite through the 1960s and into the 1970s for the expansion of industrial democracy across the United Kingdom, however, as Williamson argued, there was no consensus between political parties, trade unions and businesses on what *industrial democracy* would look like in practice.¹⁰³ This was similarly reflected in the John Lewis Partnership, where senior management were keen to discuss broadening the sharing of power, but hesitant over just how much to share. The hesitance of senior management emerged over the potential impact of short-term decisions that have long-term impacts for the future of business, demonstrating that the senior management did not feel as though the principle of "responsibility to future Partners" was felt by 'rank and file' Partners.¹⁰⁴ As described by the Chairman at the annual Central Council Dinner of

¹⁰¹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Monthly Reports to the Chairman', *The Gazette*, 10 February 1973, p. 41.

¹⁰² Jeremy Thorpe as quoted in The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Central Council Dinner', *The Gazette*, 24 November 1973, p. 1068.

¹⁰³ Adrian Williamson, 'The Bullock Report on Industrial Democracy and the Post-War Consensus', *Contemporary British History*, 30.1 (2016), pp. 119–49 (p. 124).

¹⁰⁴ Sir Bernard Miller as quoted in The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Central Council Dinner', *The Gazette*, 23 November 1968, pp. 1109–10.

1968, 'participation' was "The vogue word nowadays" and despite a change in the government, discussions over participation, productivity and efficiency would continue.¹⁰⁵

4.4 Worker participation and industrial action

Throughout the 1970s there was a continued rise in inflation and unemployment alongside sustained industrial action.¹⁰⁶ Subsequent governments continued attempts to manage the national economy but faced global economic challenges due to the suspension of the Bretton Woods system of exchange rates and the fiscal impacts of the Vietnam War and oil crisis of 1973.¹⁰⁷ In the turbulent economic environment, trade unions offered protection for workers, bolstered by Labour's election in 1974, the repeal of the 1971 Industrial Relations Act and subsequent legislation that restored some legal protect for unions and employees.¹⁰⁸ Between 1950 and 1968, trade union membership density had stagnated. However, during the 1970s, overall membership increased as more women and white-collar workers joined unions, with trade union membership density reaching 56.1 per cent in 1978.¹⁰⁹

The JLP was primarily impacted by strike action through external stoppages affecting transport or essential utilities. However, the Partnership did experience its own internal industrial disputes involving unions in the 1970s which brought to the fore the tensions in loyalty between membership to a union and membership to the JLP. For

¹⁰⁵ Sir Bernard Miller as quoted in The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Central Council Dinner', p. 1109.

¹⁰⁶ Richard Coopey and Nicholas Woodward, 'The British Economy in the 1970s: An Overview', in *Britain in the 1970s*, ed. by Richard Coopey and Nicholas Woodward (UCL Press, 1996), pp. 1–34 (p. 1).

¹⁰⁷ Coopey and Woodward, pp. 4–5; David Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation* (Penguin Random House, 2019), p. 296.

¹⁰⁸ W. Hamish Fraser, p. 230.

¹⁰⁹ Chris Wrigley, 'Trade Unions, Strikes and the Government', in *Britain in the 1970s*, ed. by Richard Coopey and Nicholas Woodward (UCL Press, 1996), pp. 273–92 (p. 276).

example, on the 5th of December 1973, the Partnership faced industrial action when approximately 140 Partners walked out of Stead McAlpin over changes being made to Partners' contracts.¹¹⁰ Partners did not return to work until 10th December which caused the majority of work at the site to come to a stop.¹¹¹ The chairman reported to the Clerk of the Central Council that the action breached the terms of the Partners' contracts and the Partnership's policy for managing disputes.¹¹² The action was reportedly taken over the alteration of remuneration and duties of a Partner by the Managing Director.¹¹³ The result the chairman, Peter Lewis, argued was "immaterial" for those outside of Stead McAlpin, but the procedure did concern the wider Partnership.¹¹⁴ Lewis asked the Managing Director, Stead McAlpin, to review the arrangements and to ensure that all Partners "can appreciate that any point of disagreement, minor or major, urgent or long-term, may be pursued without inflicting damage on their own interest and on the climate of their own works, and how this should be done", emphasising Partners' duty to the JLP and each of their roles as co-owners of the business.¹¹⁵

Unionisation varied across the JLP, dependent on the associated industry. The manufacturing businesses, Stead McAlpin and Herbert Parkinson, were unionised prior to their acquisitions and continued to be "virtually wholly unionised" throughout their life in the JLP.¹¹⁶ A 1975 report on Branch Councils and their role in industrial disputes described "spasmodic" activity in Tyrell & Green and Addlestone, some evidence in Cole Brothers

¹¹⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Stead McAlpin', *The Gazette*, 5 January 1974, p. 1207.

¹¹¹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Stead McAlpin', p. 1207.

¹¹² The John Lewis Partnership, 'Stead McAlpin', p. 1207.

¹¹³ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Stead McAlpin', p. 1207.

¹¹⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Stead McAlpin', p. 1207.

¹¹⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Stead McAlpin', p. 1207.

¹¹⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Branch Councils and Industrial Disputes'.

and Bainbridge (Killingworth) and then pronounced union activity at Speke, Bracknell, and Clearings, where the TGWU had some formal negotiating rights.¹¹⁷ Both Killingworth and Speke were locations of service buildings for John Lewis department stores: Killingworth in Newcastle and Speke in Liverpool. Service buildings were where most of the delivery teams were based and were more likely to have representation with TGWU.

The Readers' letters published in *The Gazette* throughout the 1970s demonstrated the ideological debates between trade unionists and staunch Partners. Following the rising cost of living in 1975, a self-proclaimed Stead McAlpin Partner wrote in using the pseudonym "Earnest" and argued that if Partners wanted to "really share the benefits of working together and for the good of all", they should join a trade union and that the Partnership could "keep your COUNCILS we will keep our UNION".¹¹⁸ The following week, "Earnest Partner" challenged Earnest's argument by listing the Partnership's benefits: "All right, Earnest, and we will also keep our Partnership Bonus, our gifts to needy Partners, our subsidies to sports clubs, our discount, our non-contributory pension scheme and lots of other benefits that we enjoy and you obviously despise".¹¹⁹ Throughout the November issues of *The Gazette* the exchange continued and was drawn to close when a Partner suggested that "Earnest", while "evidently written by a Trade Unionist" may have not been a Partner.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Branch Councils and Industrial Disputes'.

¹¹⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Earnest', *The Gazette*, 1 November 1975, section Readers' letters, p. 922.

¹¹⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Earnest Partner', *The Gazette*, 8 November 1975, section Readers' letters, p. 945.

¹²⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by H E Baker', *The Gazette*, 22 November 1975, section Readers' letters.

Exchanges such as these were a similar theme throughout the 1970s, particularly when stoppages occurred. While *The Gazette* did report on some of the larger industrial disputes, such as a dispute including George Henry Lee in Liverpool, most were dealt with locally and only appeared in the *Gazette* if featured in the Readers' Letters section. Readers often asked for further information about stoppages, allowing management to present the Partnership case and remind Partners of their duty to the JLP.

In 1974, Partnership drivers at Killingworth, the service building of Bainbridge, Newcastle, went on stoppage during the Christmas trading period over pay and conditions. The dispute was quickly resolved however, attracted the attention of a letter in *The Gazette* who argued that the Partners involved should be barred from the bonus.¹²¹ In response the Director of Personnel, T G Andrews, argued the position of the Partners and their responsibility in the wider Partnership:

“The Partnership has generally acted on the assumption that, if Partners do foolish things like interrupting normal working, it must be because they do not understand either their position as owners or their responsibilities to other Partners. We try to explain it to them and the matter is usually quickly resolved. However, if someone tries the patience of other Partners too far they will find that 22,000 Partners are a formidable force and that their Central Council has formidable powers”¹²²

The letter and reply were the only mention of a stoppage at Killingworth in the *Gazette*, however the industrial action that took place at Speke, the service building of George Henry Lee, Liverpool, received considerably more attention in the publication.

¹²¹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Exchange between Da Mihi Plus and T G Andrews, Director of Personnel', *The Gazette*, 1 February 1975, section Readers' letters, p. 14.

¹²² The John Lewis Partnership, 'Response by T G Andrews, Director of Personnel to Da Mihi Plus', *The Gazette*, 1 February 1975, section Readers' letters, p. 14.

The two stoppages at Speke that featured more prominently in the *Gazette* occurred in January 1975 and July 1975. The first took place following the suspension of four transport Partners after irregularities in claims for overtime had been found.¹²³ As part of Partnership practice, Partners received full pay for the duration of their suspension while investigations were carried out. The outcome of the investigation recommended disciplinary action, however, as the Partners involved had over five years of service, they were able to appeal the decision with the Partners' Counsellor. Whilst the Partners were undergoing the appeal process, transport Partners and some warehouse Partners at Speke stopped work, resulting in an emergency meeting of the Branch Council which passed the following resolution:

“That this Council deplors the action taken by some of the Transport and Warehouse Partners at Speke and urges them to consider the immediate effect this will have on our sales and therefore on our business, which is also their business, and ultimately on all our jobs”.¹²⁴

The reporting in the *Gazette* caused a flurry of letters from outraged Partners, either at the actions of the transport Partners or how management dealt with the situation.¹²⁵

The second stoppage also involved unionised Partnership drivers who staged a walkout on Friday 25th July 1975.¹²⁶ Prior to the industrial action, union-member drivers had made the decision that they would not work with non-union drivers.¹²⁷ The walkout

¹²³ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Interruption of Work at Speke', *The Gazette*, 1 February 1975, p. 3.

¹²⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Interruption of Work at Speke', p. 3.

¹²⁵ Examples include letters from The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Butcher's Mate', *The Gazette*, 8 February 1975, section Readers' letters, pp. 40–41; The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Furious', *The Gazette*, 8 February 1975, section Readers' letters, pp. 40–41; The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Non-Union Worker', *The Gazette*, 15 February 1975, section Readers' letters, p. 63; The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letters by Realist, Speaker and Loyalty', *The Gazette*, 22 February 1975, p. 85.

¹²⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Summary of Events Compiled by Mr Henry for Councillors and Partners on the Industrial Dispute at Speke', 1975, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2532/k Industrial Disputes.

¹²⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Summary of Events Compiled by Mr Henry for Councillors and Partners on the Industrial Dispute at Speke'.

was caused by the suspension of a transport Partner, a TGWU member, who had refused to work with another Partner for his shift because the other driver was “not a member of a trade union and with whom personally he is not on good terms”.¹²⁸ The stoppage took place over twelve days and involved sixteen Partners at the Speke site.¹²⁹ The industrial action escalated on 7th August when union members extended their action from the picket line at Speke to the Goods Department of George Henry Lee department store which disrupted the daily deliveries and was reported to have “outraged” Partners throughout the JLP.¹³⁰ In negotiations surrounding the dispute, the General Manager and the Managing Director, Mr Henry, drew on the Partnership’s constitutions, rules, and regulations, to argue that “co-operation between union and non-union Partners [...] were not incompatible if sensibly applied”.¹³¹

On the 13th of August, George Henry Lee held a Branch Council meeting which discussed whether Partners who had “withdrawn their labour to damage [the] business makes them unsuitable for continued membership”.¹³² The vote was carried with “30 in favour, none against and with only three *ex officio* members abstaining (the Managing Director, the Accountant and the Registrar)”.¹³³ While abstaining from the vote, the Managing Director, Mr B Henry, demonstrated a clear preference in the debate, stating that “George Henry Lee Partners had to consider, in the long term, whether – when a

¹²⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Transport Partners at Speke, the Service Building for George Henry Lee’, *The Gazette*, 2 August 1975, p. 615.

¹²⁹ E. H. Price, ‘Notice’, 1975, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2532/k Industrial Disputes.

¹³⁰ Appendix ‘C’ in The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Events Compiled by Mr Henry for Councillors and Partners on the Industrial Dispute at Speke’.

¹³¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Events Compiled by Mr Henry for Councillors and Partners on the Industrial Dispute at Speke’.

¹³² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘George Henry Lee Branch Council Discusses Speke’, *The Gazette*, 23 August 1975, p. 681.

¹³³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘George Henry Lee Branch Council Discusses Speke’, p. 681.

group wanted to abide by their own rules, not the Partnership's – they should be allowed to enjoy the Partnership's benefits" which was met with a minute-long "loud applause".¹³⁴ Upon request, the Partners involved in the dispute were invited to present their point of view and the shop steward argued that management could have done more to prevent the initial conflict as trade unionists had the "right to refuse to work with non-union labour".¹³⁵ However, the unanimous result of the vote against their continued membership demonstrated the position of councillors and a report published in the *George Henry Lee Chronicle* declared that "On Wednesday night we made history".¹³⁶

Despite the actions of the Branch Council in George Henry Lee, the union Partners returned to work after accepting the Partnership's position and contractual obligations. The management at Speke also agreed to work to ensure that union Partners would not be scheduled to work with non-union Partners unless in an emergency.¹³⁷ Following the stoppage, the General Inspector of the JLP, M H Lloyd-Davies, published an article in the *Gazette* detailing the stoppage and Partnership response. He stated that:

"Much hard work will be needed to repair the harm that has been done to decent working relationships. The Partners who have been reinstated have a special responsibility in playing their part to secure that common sense prevails over no sense."¹³⁸

¹³⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'George Henry Lee Branch Council Discusses Speke', p. 681.

¹³⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, 'George Henry Lee Branch Council Discusses Speke', p. 681.

¹³⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 'From the Strangers' Gallery', 1975, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2532/k Industrial Disputes.

¹³⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letters between Mr. Henry and Mr. Legg, John Lewis Partnership and Mr. Robinson of the Transport General Workers' Union', 1975, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2532/k Industrial Disputes.

¹³⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Recent Events at Speke', *The Gazette*, 30 August 1975, p. 700.

The statement demonstrated the constitutional rules of the Partnership in practice, that while trade union membership was tolerated, there was an expectation that the membership of the Partnership would be prioritised.

In reports on stoppages or union-based action, senior management stressed the line that “The Partnership takes a neutral position on union membership and prefers that individual Partners should decide for themselves whether or not to join a trade union” and indicating the relevant points of the constitution.¹³⁹ However, management also made sure that Partners were reminded of their responsibilities as co-owners of the business and the benefits they gained through their membership. In the case of Speke, Partners in branch also fulfilled this role through letters in the *Chronicle* and *Gazette* as well as through the actions of the branch councillors who attempted to remove the memberships of Partners who withdrew their labour.¹⁴⁰ As co-owners of the business, these Partners used the principles of knowledge sharing in the JLP to hold fellow Partners to account, question motivations and echo the sentiments of management toward industrial action.

As a branch of the JLP that was almost wholly unionised, Stead McAlpin was highlighted as an example where union mechanisms worked in conjunction with the Partnership’s. The Branch Council at Stead McAlpin was used as a “forum of public opinion”, but actively involved members of the union.¹⁴¹ In January 1975, Stead McAlpin invited trade union representatives to attend and speak at the Branch Council meeting

¹³⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Transport Partners at Speke, the Service Building for George Henry Lee’, p. 615.

¹⁴⁰ Examples include The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Jolly Livid Partner’, *The Gazette*, 9 August 1975, section Readers’ letters, p. 646; The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Very Concerned’, *The Gazette*, 9 August 1975, section Readers’ letters, p. 646; The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Enough Is Enough’, *The Gazette*, 23 August 1975, section Readers’ letters, p. 684.

¹⁴¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Branch Councils and Industrial Disputes’.

from the Strangers' Gallery. The feedback had been positive, crediting the initiative as "some contribution towards a better understanding of the respective roles of the Branch Council and trade unions at Stead McAlpin".¹⁴² The union members used Branch Council meetings to put their cases forward, just as Partners could in branch, which demonstrated the role that Branch Councils played in unionised and non-unionised branches was very similar.¹⁴³ While this did not mitigate all instances of industrial conflict at Stead McAlpin, it did improve the working relationships between Partners and unions.

As the JLP continued to navigate relationships between the Partnership institutions and trade unions, so did the government on a national scale; following a private member's Bill, the government set up a committee of inquiry, chaired by Alan Bullock, to examine forms of industrial democracy, with particular reference to forms of worker participation across Europe.¹⁴⁴ The Committee comprised of three trade union representatives, four business representatives and two academics.¹⁴⁵ As with the Donovan Commission, the JLP submitted written evidence to the Bullock Committee which described the growth of the business, the constitution of the JLP, and made recommendations based on the structure of the Central Board of the Partnership.¹⁴⁶ As the Central Board was comprised of twelve members of which five were Partners nominated by the Central Council, this established a direct link to democratic structure.¹⁴⁷ The written submission of evidence stressed the "paramount importance of the natural working unit" and that without

¹⁴² The John Lewis Partnership, 'Useful Discussions', *The Gazette*, 10 May 1975, p. 331.

¹⁴³ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Branch Councils and Industrial Disputes'.

¹⁴⁴ John Edmonds, 'The Bullock Committee, Industrial Democracy, and the Trade Unions: The Revolution That Never Was', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 41.1 (2020), pp. 213–28 (pp. 213–15).

¹⁴⁵ Edmonds, p. 215.

¹⁴⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy', *The Gazette*, 10 April 1976, p. 215.

¹⁴⁷ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 130; Salaman and Storey, p. 154.

appropriate representation across all levels of a business, the implementation of worker-directors would have “little, if any value”.¹⁴⁸

The majority report of the Bullock Committee recommended that the number of “worker representatives on company boards should be equal to the number of shareholder representatives, and that worker representatives should come from the trade unions”.¹⁴⁹ The recommendations of the report were not welcomed by business leaders or trade unions. The then chairman of the JLP, Peter Lewis, commented on the Bullock Report stating that “There cannot have been another [report] of that kind of importance so badly received throughout the country, in all quarters”.¹⁵⁰ Trade unions were divided over the issue as the movement had defined itself as being independent from the executive in the immediate postwar period to allow for criticism and undivided loyalties to the cause of “maintaining and advancing the working conditions of the workpeople”.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, the Confederation of British Industry launched a survey of its 457 members of which two-thirds responded that they were against the appointment of worker representatives on company boards. One business leader, Hector Laing of United Biscuits, even went as far as to approach the leader of the opposition, Margaret Thatcher, to ensure that if elected her party would not pursue the recommendations of Bullock, to which she agreed.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy’, p. 217.

¹⁴⁹ Edmonds, p. 215.

¹⁵⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Central Councillors’ Questions to the Chairman’, *The Gazette*, 21 May 1977, p. 379.

¹⁵¹ Edmonds, p. 218.

¹⁵² Edmonds, p. 216.

Discussions of the Bullock Committee and worker representation at board level ended in 1979 after the Labour government lost a vote of no confidence and the Conservative Party were elected in the subsequent general election. The incoming Conservative administration positioned itself firmly away from legally imposing industrial relations and began to focus on ‘taming’ trade unions through legislation.¹⁵³ Between 1980 and 1993, eight pieces of trade union legislation were introduced, resulting in unions becoming more cautious in proceeding with industrial action.¹⁵⁴ Throughout this period, trade union membership fell, particularly in the private sector, due to the economic climate and hostility towards trade unionism.¹⁵⁵ As a result, the focus in business shifted away from the role of trade unions in industrial relation to examine how management could handle industrial relations internally.

4.5 Systems of industrial relations in the JLP

Previous discussions in this chapter have focused on industrial relations primarily negotiated by senior management through engagement with government commissions and publication of articles in *The Gazette*. While Partners across all levels of the JLP had the opportunity to engage in discourse through their representatives or Partnership journalism, many did not. However, Partners did engage with industrial relations at a local and personal level through the institutions of the Partnership. This followed a broader trend in the discourse of industrial relations where, as trade union membership declined between 1979 and 1997, the focus shifted away from involving trade unions in decision

¹⁵³ Williamson, p. 137; Wrigley, ‘Trade Unions, Strikes and the Government’, p. 273.

¹⁵⁴ Wrigley, ‘Trade Unions, Strikes and the Government’, p. 273.

¹⁵⁵ Chris Wrigley, *British Trade Unions since 1933* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 27–28.

making as a means of reducing industrial conflict.¹⁵⁶ By the mid-1990s, the JLP was claiming that the fact “Few Partners do, in fact choose to join a trade union must be seen as a comment on the quality of our democracy and channels of communication”.¹⁵⁷ As political interest declined, businesses moved to incorporate participation in the form of ‘employee involvement’ which had become popular in America and Japan.¹⁵⁸

Employee Involvement centred on business goals and objectives that were management sponsored, using “information sharing or localised problem solving, without granting workers much say over high-level decision-making”.¹⁵⁹ These were already a feature of the John Lewis Partnership and recognised to be of importance, as described in the JLP’s submission to the Bullock Committee of the “paramount importance of the natural working unit”.¹⁶⁰ At branch-level, the focus on information sharing and problem solving was attended by the Committees for Communication, Registrars, and the Branch Council.

The Committees for Communication were the only institution of the Partnership comprised of only non-management Partners and aimed to enable dialogue across the JLP from the shop floor direct to the office of the chairman. They were also the oldest of the Partnership’s institutions introduced by Spedan Lewis in Peter Jones but in 1995, they were still described as one of the JLP’s “most important democratic forums”.¹⁶¹ Many of

¹⁵⁶ Peter Ackers and others, ‘Partnership and Voice, with or without Trade Unions’, in *Partnership And Modernisation in Employment Relations*, ed. by Mark Stuart and Miguel Martinez Lucio (Routledge, 2005), pp. 23–45 (p. 24).

¹⁵⁷The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Response by I D Alexander to “Partnership Democracy” by Right Winger’, *The Gazette*, 19 October 1996, section Readers’ letters, p. 948.

¹⁵⁸ Ackers and others, p. 24.

¹⁵⁹ Ackers and others, p. 24.

¹⁶⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy’, p. 215.

¹⁶¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Ensuring the Voice of the “ordinary” Partner Is Heard’, *The Gazette*, 18 March 1995, p. 168.

the issues raised in the Committee for Communications were specific to the individual branch and the Partners who worked there. These issues could be operational, such as requesting additional signage, or give opportunity to raise a grievance where other avenues had been exhausted.¹⁶² Queries raised by Committee were given to the appropriate member of the management team by the Chairman of the Committee to ensure anonymity. Questions and answers were then published in the local *Chronicle* within twenty days of the meeting.¹⁶³ One retired member of management described using the issues raised at the Committee for Communication as a key indicator for how Partners felt in a department store branch in the early 2000s:

“To give you the way I approached those, so often the things that were raised were nuts and bolts type stuff, the comforts of being in the department store, which is fine and sometimes bigger picture stuff but often it was comfort stuff so if I went into a committee [for communications] meeting and the only question was ‘why is the bacon not crispy on third break?’ you can read that two ways. You read it one, “They don’t rate this committee, they’re trivialising it” or you could say “They rate this committee, everything is probably okay” and that was the latter for me, in all that I did, was to try and make sure that there was respect and relevance to those meetings to a point where if all they talk about is crispy bacon, then I know everything is alright.”¹⁶⁴

Similarly, warning of the trivialisation of the Committee for Communications, a retired Branch Councillor described the nature of the issues raised and their importance to Partners as individuals:

“[...] in some ways it’s really trivial but mostly if it’s important to a Partner, it’s affecting the way they work, one way or another. You know if you’re waiting to go to lunch because your manager’s told you that you’re on that last sitting, but you know there’s not going to be any of your favourite thing, it does affect how

¹⁶² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Ensuring the Voice of the “ordinary” Partner Is Heard’, p. 168.

¹⁶³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Ensuring the Voice of the “ordinary” Partner Is Heard’, p. 168.

¹⁶⁴ Interview closed to public (2), *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2020, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

you work. So yeah, it might seem, at times, trivial but a lot of it was very important stuff.”¹⁶⁵

However, some members of management found the committee for communication and individuals in branch, such as the registrar, useful to determine prominent issues amongst Partners. One manager described the difficulty of deciphering the depth of an issue from readers’ letters sent to the *Gazette* and how he could use other institutions of the Partnership to understand issues:

“Trying to judge whether there was a real sort of head of steam behind Gazette letters or not was actually quite difficult. You never really knew whether it was just sort of a small handful of people using multiple pseudonyms or whether it was something more widespread. Which is where the registrars and committees for communication came in. If you had a good registrar then – they almost all women in those days, that changed – she would have her finger on the pulse and be able to give you a fairly accurate, you know, strength of what people were thinking or feeling about [...]”¹⁶⁶

As designed through the democratic structures, Partners who held positions on committees and councils were often approached when Partners had issues or grievances to raise. In addition to the Committees for Communication, Branch Councils also operated at a local level. Like the Committees for Communication, Branch Councils discussed branch affairs, but they also debated broader Partnership issues and could put forward recommendations to the Central Council.¹⁶⁷ Partners who held positions on councils or committees were often identified as a ‘middle-ground’ between non-management and management and allowed Partners the opportunity to ask questions that they might not approach their line manager with. An interviewee who held various committee and council

¹⁶⁵ T Keith.

¹⁶⁶ D Young, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

¹⁶⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Partners’ Handbook 7th Edition’.

roles throughout her career described how her position enabled her to gain the confidence of Partners:

“And I think as clerk, it was probably my job to make sure people’s voices were heard and that the chairman of the council would understand that I knew probably who had come to me and who wouldn’t of gone to him ‘cause people – they always had another job, they were always a department manager or something like that so they weren’t so – I had a little office that was completely private and apart from being branch council clerk, I was also committee for claims secretary and charities secretary and to begin with [...], I was retirement secretary so people came to me from various different bits of the democracy. I had a tiny little office at the top of a staircase and people could come there without anybody knowing in their lunch hours and anything like that – ask questions that they might not like to ask staff management on something often to do with their hours or their pay and the other significance of course was when we had pay reviews.”¹⁶⁸

The JLP relied on individuals who were directly involved in and knowledgeable of the democracy, as well as the critical side through registrars, to provide information and support to Partners. Areas of the Partnership could be difficult to navigate without knowledge or experience of who to ask and where to look, as described by another retired Partner describing the process they went through when requesting early retirement in the 2010s:

“I knew though how the procedure worked so once I stopped going through the branch, I appealed to the central registry, and I eventually won my case. Now that avenue was open to everybody but not everybody would have done it because they wouldn’t have known, necessarily about where to look for it and unless you looked for yourself hardly anybody was ever going to tell you. But that was an example perhaps where it becomes a very selfish one on one issue. Only I could fight my own corner whereas if I’d have been in a trade union, I would have had some back behind me but whether I would’ve wanted that in that set of circumstances. Might have proved useful but by and large I knew what I could do and what I couldn’t do, and I knew more – I was very conscious that my own managers didn’t seem to know as much about the

¹⁶⁸ Interview closed to public (5).

process as I did. Yet all I did in these days was read the Partnership intranet, all the regulations were there.”¹⁶⁹

Often, the most knowledgeable Partner in branch on the constitution, rules and regulations was the registrar. The JLP constitution stated that Registrars “exist[ed] to secure general illumination and prevention of ignorance in those who ought to have knowledge” alongside managing branch-level personnel matters.¹⁷⁰

Registrars provided support to Partners on a variety issues, inside and outside of work. In times of national economic strain, such as the recession in 1992, registrars saw an increase in Partners coming to them with financial difficulties.¹⁷¹ These were often impacted by circumstances outside of the JLP, for example problems that were “caused or worsened by a member of the family becoming unemployed, either as result of redundancy or as a result of a business going into liquidation”.¹⁷² This demonstrated the role that registrars played in pastoral care, as well as fulfilling their role on the critical side of the business, as emphasised by a retired Partner:

“Somebody else said to me the role [Chief Registrar] is to be defender of the faith – the Partnership faith (pause) As I say it’s a role that no longer exists – it was, I don’t know what verb to use – ‘culled’ [...] I think it’s a great pity it was culled because it did supply two advantages I believe to the Partnership. One was that sort of check from somebody inside the business but not involved in the management chain that the Partnership is doing the right thing and the other was to give a lot of support to Partners in times of personal difficulty and so on and so forth”.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ H Peters, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2020, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

¹⁷⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, pp. 55–56.

¹⁷¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Reports to the Chairman’, *The Gazette*, 3 October 1992, p. 905.

¹⁷² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Reports to the Chairman’, p. 905.

¹⁷³ K Temple.

However, the role of registrar was seen by some Partners as biased towards the management despite their positioning in the Partnership model on the critical side of the business.¹⁷⁴ As the business expanded this became an important assumption for the Partners' Counsellor and Chief Registrar to challenge as the area each individual registrar looked after grew leading to a reduced presence in branch.¹⁷⁵

While these roles and institutions provided a means of managing industrial relations throughout the business, these were undergoing a series of reforms throughout the 2000s which led to cuts and amalgamations. Mentions of trade union membership in the Readers' letters section of the *Gazette* resurfaced consistently in 2000 for the first time since the 1970s.¹⁷⁶ The letters started over a request for a referendum on trade union representation following the Employment Relations Act 1999 which emphasised trade union recognition.¹⁷⁷ The subsequent six letters that followed supported the idea of Partners joining a trade union,¹⁷⁸ demonstrating a stark change in attitude from the Readers' letters of the 1970s that disputed the need for unions and emphasised the benefits of Partnership.

¹⁷⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by All for One', *The Gazette*, 24 August 1985, section Readers' letters, p. 700.

¹⁷⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Two Hats Are Better than One', *The Gazette*, 7 April 2001, section Readers' letters, p. 284.

¹⁷⁶ Exchange of letters started in John Lewis Partnership, *The Gazette*, 82:24 (15 July 2000) until John Lewis Partnership, *The Gazette*, 82:35 (20 September 2000).

¹⁷⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Wise Owl', *The Gazette*, 15 July 2000, section Readers' letters, p. 761; Doug Pyper, 'Trade Union Legislation 1979-2010', *House of Commons Library*, CBP 7882 (2017), p. 9.

¹⁷⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Legal Right', *The Gazette*, 12 August 2000, section Readers' letters, p. 886; The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Would Vote For It', *The Gazette*, 12 August 2000, section Readers' letters, p. 886; The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Very Eager Partner', *The Gazette*, 19 August 2000, section Readers' letters, p. 909; The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Caring Branch Councillor', *The Gazette*, 26 August 2000, section Readers' letters, p. 937; The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Carpet Boy', *The Gazette*, 26 August 2000, section Readers' letters, p. 937; The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Carl Marks', *The Gazette*, 30 September 2000, section Readers' letters, p. 1068.

Following feedback received through the Partnership survey in 2003, a series of reforms were made to the democratic structures in the JLP. The Branch Councils were viewed by the Democracy Project group as “old fashioned and too formal” with branch management arguing that Branch Councils would “occasionally reject proposals simply to show that they could”.¹⁷⁹ The new Branch Forums were meant to be more of a “joint problem-solving approach” and aimed to encourage a greater proportion of non-management Partners to run for election.¹⁸⁰ Reforms were described as eliminating the separation between business and the democracy to establish a democratic business. Subsequently, Branch Forums underwent further reforms to become Partner Voice and the registry system was stripped back to a divisional level before being removed from the Partnership structure completely.

In the 1999 redraft of the constitution, the rule regarding Partner membership of trade unions was revised but the overall meaning was retained to permit Partners to belong to trade unions but that those concerned “must consider carefully their responsibilities as Partners”.¹⁸¹ The constitutional position of the JLP toward Partners and trade union membership appealed greatly to the Partners’ identity as a co-owner of the business, stressing the importance of their connection and responsibility to the Partnership as a whole when considering any course of industrial action. However, Partners would use the threat of unionisation when Partners they felt that the JLP was not meeting the expectations of Partners, for example in 2006 when the JLP changed

¹⁷⁹ Salaman and Storey, p. 160.

¹⁸⁰ Salaman and Storey, pp. 160–61.

¹⁸¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership, August 1999 Revised Draft (Supplement)’, p. 15.

their policy on pension causing outrage in the Readers' letters section.¹⁸² However, large scale unionisation has not yet taken place in the business.

4.6 Conclusion

Throughout the legislative changes of the period, the JLP has continued to position itself as an alternative way of managing industrial relations and participation in business as outlined in the evidence submitted to various government commissions. The subsequent reports of government committees challenged senior management in the Partnership to redefine the involvement of industrial relations in the business, such as the discussions around the formation of an in-house trade union to meet the requirements of the Donovan Report. As government and industry were challenged by trade unions through the 1960s and into the early 1980s, the JLP remained largely unimpeded by the ongoing industrial conflict. Where stoppages did directly impact the Partnership, senior management of the JLP utilised the structure of the Partnership to argue that it was disadvantageous of union-member Partners to take industrial action against a business they co-owned and that there were appropriate channels in place to handle disputes.

Political interest then moved away from conciliatory industrial relations with trade unions and became more focused on employee involvement which positioned the JLP ahead of many of its competitors, with formal structures already in place. At branch and individual level, industrial relations took place through both informal and formal structures but relied heavily on the knowledge held by individual experienced Partners to resolve

¹⁸² The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Astounded (and Others)', *The Gazette*, 6 May 2006, section Readers' letters, p. 12.

issues within the business. 'Local' knowledge held by Partners was built through many years of service, therefore the retention of staff was key to maintaining a 'healthy' democracy and preserving Partnership principles. It also relied on Partner engagement with the structures to build that knowledge, but as the JLP continued to expand, increased strain was placed on the democratic structures resulting in cuts or amalgamations of institutions seen to be duplicating work. The role and experience of the individual became even more important to the JLP to continue to manage industrial relations which was ultimately determined by *who* was able to access to Partnership.

5 Employment & Disability in the John Lewis Partnership

5.1 Introduction

In the 1950 edition of the constitution of the John Lewis Partnership (JLP), Rule 21(2) stated that the recruitment to the Partnership was conducted “without regard to age, sex, race, social position, family connection, religious or political views”.¹ The rule within the JLP’s constitution was often used defensively when enquiries were made around diversity or discrimination to argue that the JLP had the equivalent of an equal opportunities policy. In response to such enquiries senior management pointed to the rule that forbade “discrimination and spells out that the ability to do a job efficiently is the only legitimate way of choosing between people”.² However, there was no provision within rule 21(2) to offer protection against discrimination to disabled people.

Over the last decade, disability history has grown in visibility and practice as a field, with works examining historic experiences of disability through culture, social policy, war, and work.³ Developing out of the Disability Rights Movement in the 1980s, disability histories have supported the movement, challenging harmful stereotypes and amplifying “‘voices’ within the historiography of disability”.⁴ As a result disability histories have engaged with the discourse surrounding income policy, welfare provision, and

¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Partnership’s Policy in the Employment of Coloured Workers’, 1961, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 2524(a).

² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Response by I D Alexander to “Equal Opportunities” by Black but Comely’, *The Gazette*, 18 June 1994, section Readers’ letters, p. 529.

³ Daniel Blackie and Alexia Moncrieff, ‘State of the Field: Disability History’, *History*, 107.377 (2022), pp. 789–811 (p. 789).

⁴ Blackie and Moncrieff, pp. 790–91.

employment to support the work of the Disability Rights Movement.⁵ There have been both broad and in-depth looks at the experiences of disabled people in work in various sectors across disciplines. As part of a Disability History series, Bohata et al., explored “the ways in which disabled people and a politicised discourse of disability influenced the nature of coalfields society along material, political and cultural axes”, drawing on interdisciplinary methods to examine the pivotal role of disability in industrial society.⁶ A broader interdisciplinary study was published in 2000, comparing the postwar social policy of German, Swedish and UK governments to examine the impact on the income of disabled populations.⁷ Whereas Shah focused on the career success of ‘Disabled High Flyers’, by examining the role of differing life experiences, personal attributes and external factors such as role models across a variety of careers and sectors. However, work within the retail sector has not yet been examined in detail.

This chapter will first explore the changing definitions of ‘disability’ and the growth of the disability rights movement in the twentieth century, alongside the development of an interdisciplinary approach to disability studies, which have framed how disability histories have been written and archived. The introduction of legislation following the World Wars and its impact on employers will then be examined to situate the JLP within the broader context of industry. The in-house magazines and business papers of JS Sainsbury and Marks & Spencer (M&S), are used alongside that of the JLP, positioning

⁵ See Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Jameel Hampton, *Disability and the Welfare State in Britain* (Bristol University Press, 2016); Gareth Millward, ‘Social Security Policy and the Early Disability Movement—Expertise, Disability, and the Government, 1965–77’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 26.2 (2015), pp. 274–97.

⁶ Kirsti Bohata and others, *Disability in Industrial Britain: A Cultural and Literary History of Impairment in the Coal Industry, 1880-1948* (Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 3–6.

⁷ Helen Barnes, *Working for a Living? Employment, Benefits and the Living Standards of Disabled People* (The Policy Press, 2000).

the Partnership's response to government schemes such as the postwar quota and Access to Work scheme of the 1990s amongst its competitors, who did not have the same claim to 'Partnership difference' as the JLP. The case of disabled Partners and their status as members of the Partnership fundamentally challenged the JLP on major constitutional issues and arguments of difference from other businesses.

While this chapter focuses on the experiences of employment and disability, it is also important to understand the JLP's wider relationship with disabled people as these framed and impacted the experience of those employed in the Partnership with disabilities. In addition to employment, the JLP engaged with disabled people through charitable donations, voluntary work and as customers. These interactions also sometimes intersected, for example, shopping evenings targeting disabled customers increased sales, but were also presented as charitable acts, collaborating with organisations such as the International Voluntary Service.⁸ Similarly, there was often crossover in legislation, such as the Chronically Sick and Disabled Act 1970, which promoted services and access, improving customer access but also employee by default.

5.2 Disability Rights and the Archive

The definition and identification of individuals and groups with the term 'disability' changed throughout twentieth century. The majority of this period, the "individual model of disability" was dominant in service provision and disability policy.⁹ This model underpinned a medical understanding of disability, regarding "disabled people as 'having

⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Shopping Evenings for Disabled and Aged Customers', *The Gazette*, 17 August 1968, p. 753.

⁹ Michael Oliver, *Understanding Disability* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 44.

something wrong with them”¹⁰. Legislation, such as the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, was developed using this model and understanding of disability. It was not until the 1970s when the new “social model” was proposed and began to become institutionally accepted that the understanding of disability significantly changed.¹¹

In the United Kingdom (UK), the impact of the medicalisation of disability and the individual model on the lives of disabled people through legislation and economic challenge galvanised the disability rights movement who were neglected and disenfranchised by the postwar welfare state.¹² The Disability Income Group (DIG) was first formed by two housewives, Megan du Boisson and Berit Thornberry, in 1965, to campaign for “‘National Disability Income’ (NDI) for all disabled people based on need” to help relieve poverty amongst the disabled population.¹³ As the 1970s saw increased economic and employment challenges due to the recession, the impact on disabled people was felt more severely than non-disabled, raising the profile of disability groups such as the DIG who conducted media campaigns which gained widespread public support.¹⁴ This led to the development of further groups who focused on a broader range of campaigns outside of income policy such as the overall structural inequality of society, pushing for the recognition of the social model of disability.¹⁵

¹⁰ Michael Oliver, p. 44.

¹¹ Mike Oliver, ‘The Social Model of Disability: Thirty Years On’, *Disability & Society*, 28.7 (2013), pp. 1024–26 (pp. 1024–25).

¹² Millward, p. 275.

¹³ Millward, pp. 275–76.

¹⁴ See Jameel Hampton, *Disability and the Welfare State in Britain* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2016) for in-depth analysis of the political climate which led to the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

¹⁵ Millward, p. 290.

One of these organisations was the Disability Alliance which formed in 1974 after the founding organisations were “united in fury” at the proposals put forward in the White Paper *Social Security Provision for Chronically Sick and Disabled People* that neglected to provide a universal allowance for disabled people.¹⁶ The organisation was co-founded by Peter Townsend, an academic committed to relieving poverty and campaigning for disability rights, social care and income policies.¹⁷ In the mid-1970s, the Disability Alliance assumed the previous function of DIG as “the primary non-statutory group pressuring for statutory cash benefits and publishing academic research”.¹⁸ The Disability Alliance published a series of handbooks to advise and support disabled people as well as specific publications that tackled issues such as poverty and employment. In 1977, the Disability Alliance made a submission to the Royal Commission on Distribution of Incomes and Wealth outlining the need for three principles of equity to bring the standard of living of disabled people to that of non-disabled and to offer protection for standard of living in times of inflation, and equity between different types and different severities of disabilities.¹⁹

As groups mobilised in the UK, changes were being urged globally by the United Nations (UN). In 1975, the UN drew on the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, among others, to propose the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled

¹⁶ The Disability Alliance, ‘Poverty and Low Income Amongst Disabled People: A Submission to the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Incomes and Wealth - Lower Income Reference’, 1977, Peter Townsend Collection, University of Essex, Albert Sloman Library, 78.03 D. A. Drafts/Reports, Box 78.

¹⁷ Carol Thomas, ‘Disability: Prospects for Social Inclusion’, in *Fighting Poverty, Inequality and Injustice*, ed. by Alan Walker, Adrian Sinfield, and Carol Walker (Bristol University Press, 2011), pp. 223–40 (pp. 224–25).

¹⁸ Hampton, *Disability and the Welfare State in Britain*, p. 187.

¹⁹ The Disability Alliance.

Persons.²⁰ The Declaration comprised of thirteen points which included a definition for the term 'disabled person', anti-discrimination guidelines and series of rights such as economic and social security, protection from exploitation and the recommendation that organizations of disabled people should be consulted concerning the rights of disabled persons.²¹ Following the increased public profile of disability issues and the UN Declaration, there was a rise in organisations run by disabled people to offer consultation regarding the rights of disabled people.²²

The UN definition of disability draws upon the social model disability, stating that “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.²³ The social model originated from the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in 1976 who argued that “it was not impairment that was the main cause of the social exclusion of disabled people but the way society responded to people with impairments”.²⁴ This was then developed into a model for use in early disability studies classes by Michael Oliver, who separated the understanding of disability into two models: individual and social. The ‘individual model’ reflected much of the historic understanding of disability, focusing on

²⁰ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons', 1975 <<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/res3447.pdf>> [accessed 10 November 2023].

²¹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner.

²² Jane Campbell and Mike Oliver, *Disability Politics: Understanding Our Past, Changing Our Future* (Routledge, 1996), pp. 19–20.

²³ United Nations, 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)', 2007 <<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-1-purpose.html#:~:text=Persons%20with%20disabilities%20include%20those,Next%3A%20Article%20%20%E2%80%93%20Definitions>> [accessed 5 September 2023].

²⁴ Michael Oliver, p. 42.

the medicalisation of disability and individual narratives of personal tragedy.²⁵ Conversely, the ‘social model’ focused on problems caused by “environments, barriers and cultures” that were disabling and situating problems within their broader disabling context, for example when examining unemployment, looking at not just the employer, but provisions in transport, education and culture.²⁶ The social model became the “vehicle for developing a collective disability consciousness”, strengthening the Disability Rights Movement through recognition of common disabling barriers which united the movement.²⁷

Disability histories have challenged the medicalisation of disabilities and the implication of one “unified ‘disabled’ experience” under the social model,²⁸ to consider “understandings and experiences of bodily and cognitive differences in other contexts”, while not denying the role of bodies and minds in lived experience.²⁹ The cultural model of disability “*explicitly* blurs or erases the distinction between impairment and disability to recognise the interconnectedness of the corporeal and social worlds”.³⁰ In their recent state of the field article, Blackie and Moncrieff argued that “When viewed as a socially and culturally constructed category of difference, disability appears similar in nature to other powerful social categories, such as gender, race or class”.³¹ Using disability as a ‘lens’, they argued, will produce new insights into a wide range of histories, such as “the nature of power and the rationalisation of inequality to the evolution of the modern state, ideas about work”, just as the lens of gender, race and class have done.³²

²⁵ Michael Oliver, p. 45.

²⁶ Michael Oliver, p. 45.

²⁷ Mike Oliver, pp. 1024–25.

²⁸ Millward, pp. 277–78.

²⁹ Blackie and Moncrieff, p. 792.

³⁰ Blackie and Moncrieff, p. 792. (Emphasis from original text)

³¹ Blackie and Moncrieff, p. 792.

³² Blackie and Moncrieff, p. 793.

As the records of the business tended to be framed by the language used in the legislation, these terms were used when searching for archival sources as well as other period-specific terms, such as “cripple” or “handicapped”.³³ Records such as these have been created under a hierarchy dominated by “white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, capitalism and other forms of oppression” and the isolated use of such terms in archival descriptions and tagging continues to perpetuate that power dynamic and there has been a movement in archival studies to liberate these records and histories.³⁴ Often, descriptions miss “the complex, competing, and contradictory aspects of archival material”, as demonstrated by Brilmyer when examining the description of archival records which may often be only the title of document, offering minimal information on the individuals involved or their experiences.³⁵

Source material that centred the experience of disabled people working in retail has been difficult to locate. Richards and Burch suggest that writing histories of disability that centres the lived experiences of disabled people involves drawing on “various eclectic sources” to find the voices “less perceptible in history documents”, alongside reading official documents critically.³⁶ This chapter utilises records similar to those used in previous chapters, such as those held by the John Lewis Partnership archive and

³³ Also included further terms from the resources provided by Historic England, *Disability History Glossary* (2023), <<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/disability-history/about-the-project/glossary>> [accessed 22 September 2023].

³⁴ Michelle Caswell, *Urgent Archives: Enacting Liberatory Memory Work* (Routledge, 2021), p. 13.

³⁵ Gracen Brilmyer, ‘Archival Assemblages: Applying Disability Studies’ Political/Relational Model to Archival Description’, *Archival Science*, 18.2 (2018), pp. 95–118 (p. 107).

³⁶ Penny L. Richards and Susan Burch, ‘Documents, Ethics, and the Disability Historian’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, ed. by Michael Rembis, Catherine Kudlick, and Kim E. Nielsen (Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 166.

government documents, but also draws on publications from other retailers and the papers of the lobbying group, the Disability Alliance.

The in-house magazines of three retailers, including the JLP, have been used in this chapter to understand and compare the portrayal and, where possible, the experiences of disabled employees in the sector. These include the employee magazines from the John Lewis Partnership, JS Sainsbury and M&S. Each of these in-house magazines published varying levels of material on the employment of disabled people and experiences of disabled employees, with the majority consisting of articles or short editorials written by in-house journalists. Further insight can be gained through the Readers' Letters section of the *JLP Gazette* which accepted letters from anyone and would almost always publish a response. Comparable to other in-house magazines, this offers a unique perspective as questions were posed relating to employment and access policy as well as offering the opportunity for complaints to be publicly raised.

The everyday working experiences and challenges of disabled employees were sometimes observable within the routine reporting of the in-house magazines, for example, within the report of JLP's Central Council meetings. An issue raised in a 1988 debate on whether Central Councillors should have to be elected from Branch Councillors, rather than through open nominations, demonstrated the impact of physical barriers on individuals. The Central Councillor, Mr A D Page, stated that he was unable to be a branch councillor because "he was extremely deaf and could not hear well in the room they had for branch council meetings at Tyrell and Green. His own method of getting

informed opinion was to see the branch council clerk the following day”.³⁷ Page used his independence from the branch council to his advantage in election addresses to offer separation between the roles of branch and central councillors.³⁸ Another example in M&S’s publication, *St Michael News*, celebrated Tooting branch’s biggest-ever single sale in 1955 by sales assistant Edna Owen. Owen was described as a disabled person who began working at the store three months prior and at the time of the sale, she was in charge of the children’s knitwear counter. In the article, Owen had stated that “I love the work – especially on children’s wear – and I just treated Mr Roberts as I would any other customer”.³⁹ These examples, while limited, offer an insight into the everyday experiences of disabled people working in retail.

Additionally, as employers moved to develop equal opportunities policies in the late 1980s, there was increased interest in dedicated pieces that advertised the role that disabled people played in their businesses in the publications. Both M&S and JS Sainsbury published articles dedicated to exploring their equal opportunities policies in 1990.⁴⁰ These articles both included the stories of individual disabled employees, their experience of working for the business, as well as management perspectives.⁴¹ While these were primarily written to share and advertise company values and culture, the stories that the businesses included also offer insight into the recruitment process,

³⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 28 March’, *The Gazette*, 16 April 1988, p. 251.

³⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 28 March’, p. 251.

³⁹ ‘Edna Makes Tooting’s Biggest-Ever Single Sale’, *St Michael News*, 16 September 1955.

⁴⁰ ‘Fair Chance for Disabled People’, *St Michael News*, June 1990, pp. 6–7; ‘Disabled We Are...Incapable We’re Not’, *JS Journal*, October 1990, pp. 12–14.

⁴¹ ‘Fair Chance for Disabled People’, pp. 6–7; ‘Disabled We Are...Incapable We’re Not’, pp. 12–14.

relationships, and experience of disabled employees.⁴² Following the introduction of equal opportunities policy, discussion of disability and the workplace became more frequent across the in-house magazines, establishing the businesses as fair employers to their workforce.

The business papers of both the JLP and JS Sainsbury have also been drawn on in this chapter. These papers often related to the internal medical services of the business, response to legislation or developments in equal opportunities policy. However, additional material was located by archivists in alternate places, such as the files related to specific branches or uncatalogued boxes. In her examination of disability and archival studies, White questioned whether archives held disability collections that were not described and suggested that archives should explore working with historians to re-index some collections as was done with 'hidden' sources of women's history in the 1970s.⁴³ However, as business archives, there are tensions concerning resource to consider between the needs of present-day business of the archive and that of researchers, but as proposed by Green and Lee, collaboration between academics and business archivists could increase resource through funding and research capacity and be a way of examining 'hidden' topics such as disability and diversity in business more broadly.⁴⁴

⁴² Heller and Rowlinson, 'The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets', p. 1019.

⁴³ Sara White, 'Crippling the Archives: Negotiating Notions of Disability in Appraisal and Arrangement and Description', *The American Archivist*, 75.1 (2012), pp. 109–24 (p. 123).

⁴⁴ Green and Lee, p. 45; Unilever Archives, 'Historic Considerations of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion', *Collaborative Projects*, 2022 <<https://www.archives-unilever.com/get-involved/collaborative-projects>> [accessed 21 September 2023].

5.3 Disability and Retail Work in the Twentieth Century

By the end of the nineteenth century, department stores were “major employers” offering employment across the majority of cities in the United Kingdom.⁴⁵ Retail work consisted of both highly visible roles on the shop floor, delivering and fitting fixtures or appliances, in roles that faced customers but also a lot of ‘behind the scenes’ work through office-based and manufacturing roles. As with all employers, they were held to the changes in employment legislation over the twentieth century. The proclaimed difference of the John Lewis Partnership was its focus on the “happiness of all its members”, distinguishing itself from other retail employers with its unique ownership structure.⁴⁶

As discussed in previous chapters, the founder, Spedan Lewis, compared the experience of those working in the Partnership to be that of citizens in a democratic state and were considered co-owners of the business.⁴⁷ By exploring citizenship as a “status and a practice” achieved through legal, social and cultural terms, the challenge to JLP’s ideal of citizenship and co-ownership as a member of a Partnership can be examined through the experiences of disabled Partners.⁴⁸ The role of citizenship was also of great importance to disabled activists and wider community in the postwar period. Debates centred on citizenship, which included topics such as full participation in the labour market, lack of social status and political power and marginalization, were used to inform

⁴⁵ Lancaster, p. 125.

⁴⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 31.

⁴⁷ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 210.

⁴⁸ Grant, p. 1189.

a “conceptual framework for disabled people to articulate their experiences of disadvantage and discrimination”.⁴⁹

The introduction of the King’s National Roll Scheme in 1919 encouraged businesses to voluntarily employ disabled ex-servicemen. Prior to the First World War, the government had relied on training and employment schemes hosted by a wide range of organisations which included state departments, voluntary bodies, employers and technical schools.⁵⁰ The new scheme was proclaimed to be “a dear obligation” to those men who had served and “suffered” for their country.⁵¹ While the National Roll Scheme was voluntary, the government offered some incentive by reserving “lucrative contracts for companies on the Roll” as well as leading by example in their own offices.⁵² In the first week, the roll had 1452 companies signed up.⁵³ This expanded to over 30,000 over the scheme’s duration.⁵⁴ This included Peter Jones and then John Lewis, in its early stages of experimenting in Partnership principles, who Spedan stated employed “a good deal more than the strict proportion of ex-servicemen, having some disability [...] to entitle us to a place on the Register and to the use of the seal that appears on our stationary”.⁵⁵ After the outbreak of the Second World War, the scheme was expanded to all disabled people. The King’s National Roll Scheme challenged government assumptions around

⁴⁹ Helen Barnes, pp. 4–5.

⁵⁰ Meaghan Kowalsky, “‘This Honourable Obligation’: The King’s National Roll Scheme for Disabled Ex-Servicemen 1915-1944”, *European Review of History - Revue Européenne d’Histoire*, 14.4 (2007), pp. 567–84 (p. 570).

⁵¹ Kowalsky, p. 571.

⁵² Kowalsky, p. 571.

⁵³ Mike Mantin, ‘Coalmining and the National Scheme for Disabled Ex-Servicemen after the First World War’, *Social History*, 41.2 (2016), pp. 155–70 (p. 158).

⁵⁴ Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939*, Online (California Scholarship Online, 2012), p. 40.

⁵⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Displacement of Present Partners by Ex-Service Men Having Some Disability’, *The Gazette*, 14 April 1923, p. 195.

disability with proponents of the scheme arguing that “it was not physical impairment which hamper ex-servicemen; on the contrary, the real disability was societal prejudice”.⁵⁶ The scheme changed the relationship of the state towards disabled people, influencing work around the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, which was the first piece of legislation that treated disabled people as a single group.⁵⁷

Prior to the announcement of government legislation, the Partnership had formed its own plan of employment support for “those whose earning-power had been reduced by injuries or illness on Service” developing business policy on the assumption that a form of voluntary scheme would remain in place.⁵⁸ Spedan Lewis had formulated his own postwar plans, implementing them through changes to the JLP’s constitution and rules to create his “own Partnership ‘welfare state’”, which offered tenure to Partners with seven years’ service.⁵⁹

In 1943, the Board put forward a proposal to the Central Council for the JLP to “subsidise the employment of disabled men up to a sum not exceeding £1000 a year” which was passed unanimously by the Council in February 1944.⁶⁰ The action of the government meant that the JLP’s proposals were no longer necessary however, Spedan argued that the government’s scheme was potentially pushing the costs of subsidising the employment of disabled people onto businesses, rather than being paid for by the community, through the government.⁶¹ This view was similarly held by the British

⁵⁶ Kowalsky, p. 577.

⁵⁷ Kowalsky, pp. 576–77; Colin Barnes, ‘A Brief History of Discrimination and Disabled People’, in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. by Lennard J. Davis, Third (Routledge, 2010), p. 27.

⁵⁸ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 109.

⁵⁹ Cox, p. 133.

⁶⁰ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 109.

⁶¹ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 109.

Employers Confederation who “feared the ‘burden’ and ‘cost’ to the employers if the numbers of the disabled were not limited”.⁶²

The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 emerged from the Interdepartmental Committee on the Rehabilitation and Resettlement of Disabled Persons which reported to Parliament in 1943, becoming more commonly known as the Tomlinson Report.⁶³ The Act declared that all businesses with over twenty employees would have to adhere to a quota unless the trade or industry had “distinctive characteristics” which made the employment of disabled people difficult.⁶⁴ There were also two types of employment, attendants of electric passenger lifts and car parks, that were designated for disabled people and could only be given to a non-disabled person if a person with disabilities was unavailable for the role.⁶⁵ If a business failed to meet the quota, the business had to seek special permission from the Ministry of Labour to employ non-disabled workers.⁶⁶ Under the Act, opportunities were also offered through segregated employment through Remploy, a “non-profit making company” formed by the government under the Act or through workshops run by voluntary bodies or local authorities.⁶⁷

The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 described a disabled person in economic and medical terms as:

⁶² Helen Bolderson, ‘The Origins of the Disabled Persons Employment Quota and Its Symbolic Significance’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 9.2 (1980), pp. 169–86 (p. 183).

⁶³ Julie Anderson, *War, Disability and Rehabilitation in Britain* (Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 89.

⁶⁴ United Kingdom Parliament, *Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, C10* <[https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/7-8/10/enacted#:~:text=An%20Act%20to%20make%20further,%5B1st%20March%201944.%5D](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/7-8/10/enacted#:~:text=An%20Act%20to%20make%20further,%5B1st%20March%201944.%5D>)> [accessed 16 May 2023].

⁶⁵ Sally Sainsbury, *Registered as Disabled* (The Social Administration Research Trust, 1970), p. 75.

⁶⁶ Joan Simeon Clarke, *Disabled Citizens* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1951), pp. 156–57.

⁶⁷ Borsay, p. 135.

“a person who, on account of injury, disease, or congenital deformity, is substantially handicapped in obtaining or keeping employment, or in undertaking work on his own account, of a kind which apart from that injury, disease or deformity would be suited to his age, experience and qualifications”⁶⁸

This definition was described as “wide enough” to include “stomach ulcers and paralysis, epilepsy and tuberculosis, heart trouble and deafness, amputations and speech defects, neurosis and blindness, and any combination of these disabilities”.⁶⁹

When first introduced in May 1946, the quota was fixed at two per cent but this was quickly increased to three per cent in September 1946.⁷⁰ Once the quota increased to three per cent, the JLP fell short of the target and issued official instructions to management of the next steps, as well as a call for Partners who may qualify for registration to make an application to help the business reach the threshold.⁷¹ The JLP defined ‘disability’ in an issue of the *Gazette* in September 1946, urging Partners to register if they would qualify under the following definition to aid the business in meeting their quota target:

“[...] not necessarily mean[ing] “totally disabled” or disabled in either war. It means suffering from a physical disability that might make it difficult for one to get employment. It may mean a lame leg or an artificial hand, or it may mean deafness or bad sight”.⁷²

The quota was calculated from the total number of employees working for a business as a whole, rather than individual branches.⁷³ While businesses may have already had

⁶⁸United Kingdom Parliament, *Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944*.

⁶⁹ Clarke, p. 19.

⁷⁰ Julie Anderson, p. 195.

⁷¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act, 1944’, *The Gazette*, 28 September 1946, p. 433.

⁷² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Notes and News’, *The Gazette*, 28 September 1946, p. 425.

⁷³ Employment Services Agency, ‘The Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts 1944 and 1958 Employers Obligations’, Sainsbury Archive, SA/EMP/4/2.

disabled people working for them, they were only counted towards the quota if they joined the Ministry of Labour's register and registration was voluntary.⁷⁴

By 1949, encouragement for disabled people to register had turned to compulsion as the Partnership struggled to maintain its self-imposed "safety margin" of four per cent.⁷⁵ A notice posted in the *Gazette* by founder and then chairman, John Spedan Lewis, stated that "it would be a grave disloyalty to the Partnership for anyone, who is technically disabled to fail to let the Partnership know that".⁷⁶ He continued, stating that "If someone does so fail and the things comes somehow to light, he (or she) must not be surprised if he finds himself dropped from the Partnership, even though he many have many years of membership".⁷⁷ In posting the notice, Spedan Lewis decided not to consult the Council because the government had deemed the quota necessary and the Partnership had to follow it. The language used demonstrated an attitude of compliance, rather than support, and Spedan's ideas of loyalty and duty of Partners to Partnership, akin to that of citizens in democracy.

Through the quota scheme and wider policy, the government separated employment roles into opportunities for competitively 'effective' and 'ineffective' workers; those who would engage in open employment versus sheltered employment.⁷⁸ The Ministry of Labour appointed Disablement Resettlement Officers (DROs) who worked with disabled candidates and employers to help registered disabled people into work.⁷⁹ If the

⁷⁴ Clarke, p. 156.

⁷⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Disablement Must Be Disclosed', *The Gazette*, 10 December 1949, p. 539.

⁷⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Disablement Must Be Disclosed', p. 539.

⁷⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Disablement Must Be Disclosed', p. 539.

⁷⁸ Borsay, p. 135.

⁷⁹ Borsay, p. 135.

DROs were unable to find suitable employment on the open market, then they referred individuals to the sheltered workshops which were devised so that workers could “proceed at their own speed [...] and are not harried by threat of dismissal or by competition with the able-bodied”.⁸⁰ In 1951, the Act was praised as an “almost flawless” piece of social planning, despite early difficulties with “waiting-lists and bottle-necks”.⁸¹

However, Borsay argued that while the right to engage in the labour market through the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 gave disabled people the opportunity to “win the status of a full citizen”, they were still commonly excluded due to their “marginality to the labour market”.⁸² Following the Second World War, it benefitted the government to encourage disabled people into work as the employment of disabled people helped to combat labour shortages as well as to the economy through their production of goods and services while paying taxes.⁸³ Disabled people had already demonstrated their ‘value’ as workers to the wartime government through their employment in industrial manufacturing and were recognised again as an important labour resource to engage.⁸⁴ However, the lack of protective employment legislation following the Second World War, allowed for employers to discriminate and employment choices were limited, usually toward manual jobs, which restricted many disabled persons’ ability to participate as a ‘full citizen’ through the labour market.⁸⁵ While the quota scheme did offer a limited form of job security for disabled workers, this was only applicable to larger firms who adhered to their quota obligations. If employers were below their quota, they were not allowed to

⁸⁰ Clarke, p. 162.

⁸¹ Clarke, p. 166.

⁸² Borsay, p. 135.

⁸³ Julie Anderson, p. 184.

⁸⁴ Julie Anderson, p. 184.

⁸⁵ Borsay, pp. 136–39.

dismiss disabled workers without “reasonable cause” and this could be investigated by a disability advisory committee.⁸⁶ This could not be applied in the event that the dismissal, dropped the number of employees in an organisation to below twenty as they would no longer be obligated to meet it.⁸⁷

In 1946, 225,000 people had registered as disabled.⁸⁸ Without registration, disabled people were unable to access the industrial or vocational training programmes which were a “vital step to employment” and encouraged some to register, but the number of registered disabled people peaked in 1950 at 900,000.⁸⁹ A 1951 study described the quota system as “working well” with some unexpected outcomes such as employers encouraging existing employees with ‘eligible’ disabilities to register so that they did not have to hire further disabled people “whose infirmity might really be a handicap”.⁹⁰ The study also highlighted the need for highly skilled and well-resourced DROs that were knowledgeable of disabilities, personable, familiar with local services and with a manageable workload so that they could work with applicants, however, DROs only had “the Employment Exchange interview and short medical report” to guide them and to persuade employers that they had found a disabled candidate to fulfil a position.⁹¹ The quota scheme attempted to encourage employers to be open-minded toward disabled candidates and to challenge prejudice, however “the very seriously handicapped” continued to face difficulties gaining employment.⁹²

⁸⁶ Employment Services Agency.

⁸⁷ Employment Services Agency.

⁸⁸ Julie Anderson, p. 195.

⁸⁹ Julie Anderson, p. 195.

⁹⁰ Clarke, pp. 156–57.

⁹¹ Clarke, pp. 157–58.

⁹² Clarke, p. 161.

The Partnership continued to urge Partners to come forward and speak to their registrar if they felt that they might qualify for registration, listing “common defects” such as “bad sight or deafness, as well as the more obvious disablements” as qualifiers under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act.⁹³ As the JLP continued to struggle to meet its four per cent target as a whole, senior management began publishing lists in the *Gazette* of branches that had the highest figures and those with the lowest. Management argued that responsibility to reach the quota fell on two groups of people: management and the managed, stating that “if any of them know, or even suspect, that they belong to this category, it is their duty to tell their Registrar”.⁹⁴ Notices reinforced the chairman’s threat of termination if disability was not disclosed while acknowledging that “In private life the courage which conceals ill-health and pain is very admirable” but that “business life demands the courage which reveals it”.⁹⁵

In 1953, the Piercy Committee was appointed to review “in all its aspects the existing provision for the rehabilitation, training and resettlement of disabled persons” and to make recommendations to improve the government’s return on its investment into these policies.⁹⁶ This included evaluating the work that had been done to widen the employment opportunities in industry for disabled people, such as the register and the quota scheme. The Committee reported in 1956 and attempted to estimate the number of people impacted by the policies but there were issues compiling statistics. While the

⁹³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Comment by the Department of Maintenance and Expansion’, *The Gazette*, 7 January 1950, p. 581.

⁹⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Notes and News’, *The Gazette*, 12 August 1950, p. 325.

⁹⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Notes and News’, p. 325.

⁹⁶ Committee of Inquiry on the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons, ‘Report of the Committee of Inquiry on the Rehabilitation, Training and Resettlement of Disabled Persons’ (HMSO, 1956), p. 1, Wellcome Collection <<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ytzssjpm>> [accessed 25 September 2023].

Committee argued that the fields covered by the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act could offer comprehensive statistics, these were not complete because “registrations are made voluntarily and frequently are not renewed”.⁹⁷ Registration lasted for a minimum of six months up to a maximum of five years for those “whose disabilities were unlikely to diminish as handicaps”.⁹⁸ Expiration of registration did not impact employers’ quota figures, so long as the individual remained with the same employer to ensure that previously registered disabled people did not have their employment terminated due to their lapse in registration.⁹⁹

Overall, the Committee determined that the quota scheme had been useful in widening the opportunities of employment and offering some job security but argued that “its main value lies in its educational importance in demonstrating the wide range of occupations which can be undertaken successfully by disabled persons”.¹⁰⁰ The report also stated that “it has been the practice to take proceedings in law only when infringement has been flagrant”.¹⁰¹ Borsay argued that the “shift of emphasis from enforcement to persuasion sounded the death toll for employment rights”, allowing businesses to evade their quota obligation without reprimand.¹⁰²

Following a change of chairman in 1955 and the report of the Piercy Committee in 1956, the JLP altered its approach towards the quota scheme. While previously classifying the Partnership’s target of four per cent as to allow for a ‘safety margin’ on the

⁹⁷ Committee of Inquiry on the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons, p. 4.

⁹⁸ Committee of Inquiry on the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons, pp. 40–41.

⁹⁹ Committee of Inquiry on the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons, p. 43.

¹⁰⁰ Committee of Inquiry on the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons, p. 93.

¹⁰¹ Committee of Inquiry on the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons, pp. 41–42.

¹⁰² Borsay, pp. 135–36.

quota, in 1958 the JLP reframed its ambitions in terms of Partnership principles. Drawing on the constitution, it was argued that the Partnership had a “much deeper interest in an Act which is manifestly designed to protect those members of the community who are less able than others to protect themselves”.¹⁰³ The reframing reflected the shift emphasis away from enforcement and compliance towards goodwill and a duty to help others.

By 1964 the unemployment rate of disabled people was four times higher than that of the population as a whole.¹⁰⁴ A study in 1965 identified key factors that impacted the employment of disabled people included “a general tendency to underestimate the capacity of disabled persons, prejudice against the employment of disabled persons, prejudice against the employment of the disabled, and lack of transport facilities”.¹⁰⁵ Factors such as modernisation in industry also had an impact on job availability, for example, as lifts became automatic, the need for lift attendants became increasingly limited. In 1965, Mr J E Williams, a goods lift operator in the East House of John Lewis, retired on a “premature pension” because the goods lifts became automated, and the Partnership was unable to find him alternative suitable employment due to his “severe disabilities”.¹⁰⁶ Other developments in industry and business could offer some employment opportunities. In 1971, the political decision to switch to decimal prices increased some job opportunities in JLP’s clearings department in the ticket factory which produced tickets for the majority of the Partnership’s stores.¹⁰⁷ Additional roles advertised in 1969 that urged pensioners to apply for full or part-time roles as “the work is clean and

¹⁰³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Partners Registered as Disabled’, *The Gazette*, 24 May 1958, p. 387.

¹⁰⁴ Sainsbury, p. 75.

¹⁰⁵ Sainsbury, p. 82.

¹⁰⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Like Being Executed’, *The Gazette*, 13 April 1968, p. 281.

¹⁰⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Ticket Operators Wanted’, *The Gazette*, 20 September 1969, p. 857.

much of it can be done sitting down, so neither age nor disability would be a bar”.¹⁰⁸ The work was also advertised as being flexible. However, these roles were unlikely to provide long-term employment as additional staffing was only needed to meet the introduction of decimal pricing.

Despite the growth in economy and the increasing affluence in society, levels of inequality rose between disabled and non-disabled people and galvanised a grass-roots political movement which focused on the rights of disabled people and their exclusion.¹⁰⁹ Led by DIG, the profile of disability was raised in the mid-late 1960s, alongside the rediscovery of poverty, which brought issues of social and welfare exclusion into view of the media and the public, creating “a climate for public and political discourse about disability issues where there was none before”.¹¹⁰

Following a private member’s Bill and widespread public support, the Labour government introduced new legislation in 1970 to increase state support for disabled people.¹¹¹ The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 increased the statutory responsibilities for disabled people focusing on the role of local authorities and services, as well as “suitable housing, public access building adaptation, education for mentally and physically disabled children, and considerations for children and elderly poor people”.¹¹² Retailers and other building owners were impacted by sections four to eight of the Act which were concerned with adaptations to public buildings to ensure access.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Ticket Operators Wanted’, p. 857.

¹⁰⁹ Campbell and Oliver, p. 61.

¹¹⁰ Hampton, *Disability and the Welfare State in Britain*, p. 96.

¹¹¹ Jameel Hampton, ‘The 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act–Fifty Years On’, *Disability & Society*, 35.5 (2020), pp. 831–36 (p. 832).

¹¹² Hampton, ‘The 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act–Fifty Years On’, p. 832.

¹¹³ Hampton, *Disability and the Welfare State in Britain*, pp. 154–55.

The Act included provision, if possible, for access to public premises, including parking facilities and sanitary conveniences, as well as appropriate signage to display compliance for users.¹¹⁴ This was then expanded in a 1976 Amendment act to ensure that employers constructing premises to offer provisions for the needs of disabled employees, including parking and bathrooms, in an effort to increase job opportunities for disabled people.¹¹⁵

As part of efforts to encourage the private sector to consider their role in the employment of disabled people, the Companies Act 1980 stated that large businesses employing over 250 people were required to detail their specific policies on “recruitment, training, and career development of workers with disabilities” in their annual reports.¹¹⁶ It was argued that the “compulsory disclosure of company policy would have the advantage of ensuring top management are aware of their own companies’ practice”.¹¹⁷ However, the act was not enforced and there was no penalty for non-compliance.¹¹⁸ Additionally, statements included in annual reports were kept broad, rather than detailing specific internal policy, such as this summary on equal opportunities from Sainsbury’s in 1986: “Group employment policies respect the individual and offer career opportunities

¹¹⁴ United Kingdom Parliament, *Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, C44* <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1970/44/crossheading/premises-open-to-public/enacted>> [accessed 16 May 2023].

¹¹⁵ Mrs M Rudge, The Legal Adviser in The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Monthly Reports to the Chairman’, *The Gazette*, 15 January 1977, p. 1181.

¹¹⁶ Disability Alliance, ‘Employment Services for People with Disabilities’, in *Disability Rights Handbook for 1981, 1980*.

¹¹⁷ Patricia Tisdall, ‘Giving Disabled a Fair Share of the Jobs’, *The Times* (7 July 1980), 60670 edition, p. 19.

¹¹⁸ Patricia Thornton and Neil Lunt, *Employment for Disabled People: Social Obligation or Individual Responsibility?* (Social Policy Research Unit, 1995), II, p. 16 <<https://pure.york.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/employment-for-disabled-people-social-obligation-or-individual-re>>.

regardless of sex, race or religion, and for the disabled according to their skills and capacity”.¹¹⁹

Within these policies, employers were still able to reject applicants if they did not meet the business’ medical standards. Health checks prior to the start of employment were often carried out by in-house medical services who were employed as part of company welfare and health and safety programmes. The 1979 J Sainsbury Limited Medical Manual described medical staff as “acting as agents of the employer” in the examinations of applicants and that the relevant hiring manager was “entitled to a medical opinion of the applicant’s suitability for the proposed job”.¹²⁰ The Medical Manual also featured a list of thirteen criteria points that allowed applicants to be rejected, which included if applicants were “mentally retarded”, had “severe asthmatic conditions and rheumatic heart conditions with cardiac failure” and “all congenital or traumatic lesions which cause difficulty in walking, lifting or standing (unless a clerical job is in mind)”.¹²¹ An additional note stated that “Store servicemen may be disabled persons with various limitations”.¹²² The medical service offered additional advice on the employment of disabled persons by offering a graded guideline which medically defined what an individual may or may not be able to do at work. Grade A covered those who were unfit for work and therefore “medically unemployable” whereas Grade D included those who:

“[...] despite a medical impairment, are not restricted in their ability to change their occupation to most other jobs consistent with their age, training or

¹¹⁹ Sainsbury’s, ‘Annual Report and Accounts 1986’, 1986, p. 13, Sainsbury Archive, SA/CO/5/1/37.

¹²⁰ J Sainsbury Limited Medical Manual, ‘Medical Records as Privileged Information’, 1979, p. 1, Sainsbury Archive, SA/BRA/4/4/8.

¹²¹ J Sainsbury Limited Medical Manual, ‘Criteria for Rejection from Employment for New Applicants’, 1979, p. 14, Sainsbury Archive, SA/BRA/4/4/8.

¹²² J Sainsbury Limited Medical Manual, ‘Criteria for Rejection from Employment for New Applicants’, p. 14.

experience, except those for which high standards of physical fitness are required".¹²³

Using criteria such as this enabled in-house medical service of large employers to act as gatekeepers to employment based on the medical model of disability, acting on behalf of the employer in the business' interests.

In her 1985 work, *Disabled State*, Stone identified physicians as gatekeepers between disabled individuals and the welfare programs, arguing that physicians were given clinical criteria to determine individual cases of impairment and deciding how strictly the criteria would be applied.¹²⁴ Tools like JS Sainsbury's grading system allowed in-house medical services to fulfil a similar role within private industry. The criteria determined suitability to work using statements such as "those [who] are able to continue in their normal occupation despite the disability, but who are limited in their ability to change their occupation" or "the sedentary amputee", compared to another category which included "a person blind in one eye from childhood, who is well adapted to the disability".¹²⁵ These gradings attempted to separate economically productive disabled people that would benefit the business from individuals judged to be unemployable and therefore economically unproductive.

Once in employment, however, medical services could move from gatekeepers to valuable resources for disabled employees. A letter to the *JLP Gazette* in 1975 from "Disabled and Grateful" argued the value of the Partnership's medical service "as a Partner who through no my fault of my own have to go to the Medical Room nearly every

¹²³ J Sainsbury Limited Medical Manual, 'Disabled Persons', 1979, p. 15, Sainsbury Archive, SA/BRA/4/4/8.

¹²⁴ Deborah A Stone, *The Disabled State* (Temple University Press, 1985), p. 149.

¹²⁵ J Sainsbury Limited Medical Manual, 'Disabled Persons', p. 15.

day, also have physiotherapy at the least once a week, to help keep me as fit as possible to continue to work”.¹²⁶ Additionally, the JLP Occupational Health Magazine, *Synapse*, described the various medical conferences attended by their medical services team which also included the sharing of information on recent developments in ideas surrounding mental illness and social service resources.¹²⁷

Increased awareness and the sharing of information was identified as a key way to engage the wider public about the barriers experienced by disabled people. Following their 1975 Declaration, the UN announced 1981 to be the “International Year of Disabled Persons” to focus attention “on the enjoyment by disabled persons of rights and opportunities to ensure their full participation and integration into society”.¹²⁸ The objectives of the year included “increasing public awareness; understanding and acceptance of persons who are disabled; and encouraging persons with disabilities to form organizations through which they can express their views and promote action to improve their situation”.¹²⁹ Reflecting on access in a 1995 speech to the ‘Access for All Conference’ hosted by Sainsbury’s, Dr Stephen Duckworth, Managing Director of Disability Matters, stated that the only major impact of the International Year of Disabled People had been the installation of ramps, dubbing it instead the “Year of the Ramp!”.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Disabled and Grateful’, *The Gazette*, 1 February 1975, section Readers’ letters, p. 14.

¹²⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘An Introduction to MIND Campaign’, *Synapse*, February 1972, p. 17, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2715.

¹²⁸ James MacKay, ‘Year of the Disabled’, *Financial Times*, 11 April 1981, 28444 edition.

¹²⁹ UN Enable, ‘The International Year of Disabled Persons 1981’, 2003
<<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disidydp.htm#:~:text=In%201976%2C%20the%20General%20Assembly,rehabilitation%20and%20prevention%20of%20disabilities>> [accessed 10 November 2023].

¹³⁰ Dr Stephen Duckworth, ‘Access for All Conference Hosted by Sainsbury’s’, 1995, Sainsbury Archive, SA/CR/CH/1/5/12.

Retailers responded to the UN objectives in different ways. M&S focused on the needs of disabled customers, stating that “the needs of handicapped people are taken into consideration in all new developments” and describing how customers were able to use the lift alongside staff in two-floor stores, if needed.¹³¹ Comparatively, when asked in the Readers’ Letters section what contribution the JLP would make to the International Year of Disabled People, the General Secretary, J R Card, responded that “In 1980, gifts totalling £5415 were made to 24 charities working on behalf of the handicapped and disabled” and that it was “matter of debate whether the Partnership should disturb the broad and considered pattern of its giving because of a decision that 1981 is to be the “Year of the Disabled”, or whether it should give something extra”.¹³² This view among both of the retailers demonstrated that disabled people were still seen as consumers and beneficiaries of charitable funds, rather than members of their workforce and accessibility was only highlighted as a public issue for customers.

M&S targeted issues of accessibility internally, by addressing the needs of customers, but also externally, using their influence as an event sponsor and business in the community. Issues around accessibility had previously been brought to the fore in the 1970s due to protests and actions from the Disabled Drivers’ Association and the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation.¹³³ In 1979, M&S had funded research into access and events such as concerts and festivals, working with the Greater London

¹³¹ ‘Make It an Able Year’, *St Michael News*, January 1981, p. 2.

¹³² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Response by J R Card to “Year of the Disabled” by Seamus Fielding’, *The Gazette*, 24 January 1981, section Readers’ letters, p. 1102.

¹³³ Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People, ‘A Brief History of Disabled People’s Self-Organisation’, 2013 <<https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/research/brief-history-disabled-peoples-self-organisation-pdf/>> [accessed 10 November 2023].

Association for the Disabled (GLAD) and the Greater London Arts Association.¹³⁴ The research found that physical access issues, such as “narrow doorways preventing access to toilets, no handrails or lift buttons inconveniently placed for wheelchairs [were] enough to dishearten the disabled”.¹³⁵ As a result, Marks and Spencer requested that all the directors of regional arts festivals that M&S were involved in “consider the needs of the disabled”.¹³⁶ Additionally, M&S planned and financed the installation of sixty induction loops for “Britain’s hard of hearing”, with the first installed in the Museum of London, which was the first museum in the country to have one installed.¹³⁷ Similar to the JLP, M&S had a legacy of charitable giving inspired by founder, Michael Marks, and the business had a special interest in investing in “projects, especially experimental ones, which will also be of long term benefit to the community”.¹³⁸

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 made it “unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a disabled person”.¹³⁹ The Act offered protection throughout the employment process from recruitment through to termination of contract and placed a duty on employers to make adjustments such as adapted working hours, acquisition of necessary equipment or physical changes to buildings.¹⁴⁰ Similar to the 1944 Act, legislation applied only to businesses with over twenty employees. While explaining the stipulations of the new anti-discriminatory legislation in a 1997 issue of *The Gazette*, the JLP declared that it had always had a “‘progressive’ attitude to the employment of disabled

¹³⁴ ‘General Welfare’, *St Michael News: Special Report*, August 1979, p. 3.

¹³⁵ ‘General Welfare’, p. 3.

¹³⁶ ‘General Welfare’, p. 3.

¹³⁷ ‘Launch of New Charity Project’, *St Michael News*, April 1981, p. 2.

¹³⁸ ‘How We Deal With 14,000 Appeals a Year’, *St Michael News: Special Report*, August 1979, p. 2.

¹³⁹ United Kingdom Parliament, *Disability Discrimination Act 1995, C50*
<<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/50/enacted>>.

¹⁴⁰ United Kingdom Parliament, *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*.

people”, describing that “for many years the policy has been that if a Partnership recruiter is faced with two people of otherwise equal ability, one of whom is disabled, it should be the disabled applicant who is recruited”.¹⁴¹ This policy of ‘positive recruitment’ was similar to the West German model which prioritised disabled applicants over non-disabled, however this approach to recruitment, while supported by some campaign groups, did not make it into law in the United Kingdom.¹⁴²

There were cultural shifts amongst employers towards the employment of disabled people in the 1990s. Employment of disabled people increasingly became identified as commercially advantageous to employers, as research in the 1990s argued that a diverse workforce that mirrored a diverse customer base was able to “get closer to the customer, understand their needs and so increase the company’s market share”.¹⁴³ Increasingly, the social model of disability, which had emerged in the mid-1970s, became central to new equality training on disability.¹⁴⁴ Organisations began to “more widely endorse” equal opportunities policies across all sectors of the labour market.¹⁴⁵ While there had been businesses that had long-standing policies based on principles of equality, Jewson and Mason argued that within these policies “there was a tendency to see discrimination as a product of the behaviour of prejudiced individuals” rather than acknowledgement of broader systematic and structural issues.¹⁴⁶ Businesses benefited from introducing equal opportunities policies as they were considered “insurance policies”, offering legal

¹⁴¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Learning from Statistics’, *The Gazette*, 14 June 1997, p. 535.

¹⁴² David Jordan, ‘A New Employment Programme Wanted for Disabled People’ (Disability Alliance Publications, 1979), Peter Townsend Collection, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex, Box 79.

¹⁴³ Sonali Shah, *Career Success of Disabled High-Flyers* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2005), p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ Mike Oliver, p. 1024.

¹⁴⁵ Nick Jewson and David Mason, “Race”, *Employment and Equal Opportunities: Towards a Political Economy and an Agenda for the 1990s*, *The Sociological Review*, 42.4 (1994), pp. 591–617 (p. 592).

¹⁴⁶ Jewson and Mason, pp. 596–97.

protection for the business through codes of conduct which regulated employee relations.¹⁴⁷ Equal opportunity policies were also of commercial benefit, helping to build reputation of businesses as a good employers and maintaining a positive public persona.

Both M&S and JS Sainsbury highlighted their equal opportunities policies in their in-house magazines in 1990. Each retailer broke down the key aspects of their policies describing their efforts to tackle discrimination from interview to promotions. Regarding disability, M&S publicised what stores were “already doing to integrate disabled people into their staff”, to lead by example for other branches of the business.¹⁴⁸ The Newcastle branch was presented as an exemplar as they had recently received a “certificate of merit under the Employment Services’ Fit for Work Award Scheme” as the store had become “actively involved in providing work experience for disabled people two years ago after an approach by a sheltered housing and workshop group, the Shaw Project”.¹⁴⁹

JS Sainsbury followed a similar approaches of highlighting success stories of branches, but interviewed some of their disabled employees and their line managers to discuss their experiences at work.¹⁵⁰ One example presented was Michael Stephenson, who had begun work on grocery but was moved to trolley retrieval collector as he had difficulty lifting boxes.¹⁵¹ In the interview, Stephenson asked for more businesses to give disabled people a chance, stating that “Disabled people have a lot going for them here” and describing his own experience at work, “I don’t draw attention to my disability. It’s an advantage that I don’t look disabled because the less people know, the less likely they

¹⁴⁷ Jewson and Mason, pp. 602–3.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Fair Chance for Disabled People’, pp. 6–7.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Fair Chance for Disabled People’, pp. 6–7.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Disabled We Are...Incapable We’re Not’, pp. 12–14.

¹⁵¹ ‘Disabled We Are...Incapable We’re Not’, p. 12.

are to try to do things for you, which is not what disabled people want”.¹⁵² Both of these articles stressed the capability and benefits of employing disabled people and offered guidance through the examples of what other branches had been doing.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, a series of schemes and legislation was introduced by the Labour governments including the setting up of the Disability Rights Commission in 1999, a subsequent Disability Discrimination Act in 2005 and a Welfare Reform Bill in 2009.¹⁵³ While “apparently enormous gains made by disabled people in their campaigns for disability rights”, overall, the governments’ approach was criticised for not improving the lives of the majority of disabled people due under-resourcing which became further restricted by the austerity measures of the 2010 coalition government.¹⁵⁴ Oliver and Barnes centred the concerns of disability activists over the “assimilation of disability politics into mainstream political agendas” as well as the increased power and influence of big charities which adapted the “ideas and languages of the disabled people’s movement”, while comparatively the disabled people’s movement has declined.¹⁵⁵

The Equality Act 2010 brought together anti-discrimination legislation for disabilities and equality legislations of protected groups such as gender, sex, age, race, sexual orientation, and religious belief.¹⁵⁶ Regarding employment and disability, the Equality Act prohibited “employers asking applicants about their health before deciding whether to employ them” and introduced provisions for dealing with indirect

¹⁵² ‘Disabled We Are...Incapable We’re Not’, p. 12.

¹⁵³ Carol Thomas, p. 230.

¹⁵⁴ Carol Thomas, pp. 231–33.

¹⁵⁵ Michael Oliver and Colin Barnes, *The New Politics of Disablement* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 169–70.

¹⁵⁶ Carol Thomas, p. 238.

discrimination.¹⁵⁷ Critiques of the Act highlighted that there had been a “missed opportunity” to reform the definition of disability and that there was no duty placed on the public sector to “enhance and embed the involvement of disabled people in the equality planning processes”.¹⁵⁸

Outside of the requirements of the legislation, businesses began utilising the expertise and experience of their own employees to inform policy. In 2009, the JLP had become an employer of distinction, promoting equal access and launching a new diversity toolkit to “provide information on diversity issues”.¹⁵⁹ Use of Partner-led networks, such as Pride in the Partnership, to support inclusiveness in the business developed and in 2016, Nicola Paul, Manager of Diversity and Inclusion called for Partners to set up a disability network alongside an intergenerational network.¹⁶⁰ Then, in 2017, the JLP was recognised as a Disability Confident Employer by the Department for Work and Pensions for the “support and consideration we give to disabled people in recruitment and their employment”.¹⁶¹ The JLP aspired to become a Disability Confident Leader and were working with the Business Disability Forum to achieve this goal, which it was awarded in 2019. The Partnership was recognised due its work to ensure support and adjustments for candidates in specialist job boards and the Partner networks, in particular, Ability.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ Anna Lawson, ‘Disability and Employment in the Equality Act 2010: Opportunities Seized, Lost and Generated’, *Industrial Law Journal*, 40.4 (2011), pp. 359–83 (pp. 369–76).

¹⁵⁸ Anna Lawson, p. 382.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Breaking down Barriers’, *The Waitrose Chronicle*, 9 May 2009, p. 9.

¹⁶⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Network Roadshow “Fantastically Insightful”’, *The Gazette*, 15 July 2016, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘John Lewis Partnership, Corporate Responsibility Report 2017/2018’, 2018, p. 16 <<https://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/content/dam/cws/pdfs/our-responsibilities/2018/jlp-cr-report-201718-digital.pdf>> [accessed 13 June 2023].

¹⁶² Sahar Nazir, ‘John Lewis Named “Disability Confident Leader”’, *Retail Gazette*, 27 February 2019 <<https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2019/02/john-lewis-named-disability-confident-leader-hiring-staff-disabilities>> [accessed 19 June 2023].

The continued emphasis on staff training toward disability awareness and mental health training for management was also commended.¹⁶³

5.4 The Quota Scheme and its Demise

While there have been significant developments in legislation and disability rights since the removal of the quota in 1994, the quota scheme remained the government's main policy throughout the twentieth century for the employment of disabled people. However, a lack of meaningful enforcement of scheme led to many businesses simply avoiding their quota obligations and carrying on business as normal. Despite making claims over Partnership difference, the JLP's response to the quota did not differ significantly from its close competitors, M&S and JS Sainsbury. The response of these three businesses to the quota scheme and the programmes to encourage business engagement in the period leading up to its removal link to broader debates of participation and citizenship which were particularly relevant to the Partnership and its organisation as effectively a small nation.

In 1973, a reader asked the Director of Personnel, T G Andrews, through the Readers' letters section of the *Gazette* how many disabled people were employed by the JLP and what the Partnership did to assist them.¹⁶⁴ Andrews reported that there were 298 registered disabled Partners and that the Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts had been "so successful in their application that today organisations throughout this country are unable to engage sufficient disabled people to meet this statutory requirement".¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Nazir.

¹⁶⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Viewer', *The Gazette*, 3 March 1975, section Readers' letters, p. 122.

¹⁶⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Viewer', p. 122.

However in December 1972, there were 610,107 registered disabled persons but 14.9 per cent were unemployed, compared to the national unemployment figure of 4.1 per cent.¹⁶⁶

It was not an offence if businesses were unable to meet the quota, however it was “the duty of every such employer to allocate to registered disabled people vacancies as they occur on the staff until the quota is reached” and permission from the Ministry of Labour needed to be gained before the employment of non-disabled workers.¹⁶⁷ It was the responsibility of the employer to keep records to that showed “the total number and names of all people employed together with the date of any engagement in, or termination of, employment”.¹⁶⁸ If an employer failed to meet the quota and then employed or offered employment to either unregistered or non-disabled workers, the maximum penalty was a “£100 fine or 3 months’ imprisonment, or both”.¹⁶⁹ This penalty could be increased to a £500 for a body corporate.¹⁷⁰ However this offence was rarely prosecuted and by 1978 there had only been nine prosecutions of employers who failed to meet the quota, despite only 36.8 per cent of firms fulfilling their quota in the same year.¹⁷¹

Permits to allow organisations to employ outside of the quota scheme were issued by the Ministry of Labour and subject to a set period and for a specified number of people or roles.¹⁷² Employers needed to provide their total number of employees as well as the

¹⁶⁶ Hansard, ‘Written Answers, Vol. 849, Col. 335’, 1973 <<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1973-01-30/debates/4f923b0a-b53a-4c27-9c99-2a1967a17376/WrittenAnswers#main-content>> [accessed 5 October 2023].

¹⁶⁷ Employment Services Agency.

¹⁶⁸ Employment Services Agency.

¹⁶⁹ Employment Services Agency.

¹⁷⁰ Employment Services Agency.

¹⁷¹ Borsay, p. 136.

¹⁷² Employment Services Agency.

total number of registered disabled employees in their permit request and permits could be issued for singular or bulk vacancies. Correspondence between the Personnel Manager of JS Sainsbury and the Ministry of Labour Employment Exchange showed that the business received a permit for “the engagement of 5000 persons as workers of all grades in Food industry” from at least 1965.¹⁷³ The permit was valid for six months and the Employment Exchange would prompt JS Sainsbury to renew their permit when they were nearing the expiry, asking them to provide their figures of the total number of employees and the number of registered disabled persons.¹⁷⁴

The permit stipulated that the business needed to continue “to notify all vacancies to the Ministry of Labour and be willing to consider sympathetically the engagement of any suitable registered persons who become available”.¹⁷⁵ In 1965, the Employment Exchange wrote to JS Sainsbury about a vacancy for a ‘Porter’ where the exchange had been unable to “submit a suitable disabled person” to them for employment and reminded them of the obligation as an employer to quota.¹⁷⁶ The Personnel Department responded referencing their existing block permit. The correspondence from the Employment Exchange surrounding individual posts and six-monthly permit renewal continued to remind businesses of their obligation to the quota, however these were ‘soft’ reminders, with businesses not required to provide further evidence or justification toward the permit

¹⁷³ Correspondence in this file suggests that the permit had been an ongoing agreement prior to September 1965: ‘Correspondence with D of E 1967-74’, Sainsbury Archive, SA/EMP/4/2.

¹⁷⁴ Employment Services Agency.

¹⁷⁵ Correspondence with D of E 1967-74, ‘Correspondence between A. J. Waller of J Sainsbury Ltd and F. Scoble of Ministry of Labour Employment Exchange’, 1967, Sainsbury Archive, SA/EMP/4/2.

¹⁷⁶ Correspondence with D of E 1967-74, ‘Correspondence between the Personnel Department of JS Sainsbury and the Ministry of Labour Employment Exchange’, 1965, Sainsbury Archive, SA/EMP/4/2.

renewal other than a “lack of suitable applicants”, as submitted by J. Sainsbury in 1972.¹⁷⁷ From the employer’s perspective, the correspondence demonstrated observance of the legislation but placed emphasis on finding legal workarounds through the permit system, rather than an attempt by management to change or alter the culture of the workplace.

Despite increased levels of unemployment, the JLP’s Director of Personnel continued to claim in 1977 that the Partnership was “not failing in its duty” as “the number of registered disabled available for employment is now a long way below this percentage of the working population”.¹⁷⁸ However, the Disability Alliance argued in 1979 that the “unemployment figures for the registered disabled [were] already at a level between two and three times the national average”.¹⁷⁹ These arguments were demonstrative of the wider debates on the usefulness of the quota system which had been ongoing and the Department of Employment had issued an ‘extensive review’ of the scheme between 1970 and 1974.¹⁸⁰ Businesses tended to see the quota as an arbitrary barrier as they were unlikely to face a legal consequence for non-compliance and businesses were able to circumvent requirements by seeking permission from the government, whereas the Disability Alliance argued that the quota needed to go further.¹⁸¹ However in December 1975 the Labour government announced the quota scheme’s retention due increased public and parliamentary pressure.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ Correspondence with D of E 1967-74, ‘Correspondence between the Personnel Department of JS Sainsbury and the Ministry of Labour Employment Exchange’, 1972, Sainsbury Archive, SA/EMP/4/2.

¹⁷⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Response by T G Andrews to “Helping Disabled Young People” by Abled’, *The Gazette*, 18 June 1977, section Readers’ letters, p. 474.

¹⁷⁹ Jordan.

¹⁸⁰ Bolderson, pp. 170–71.

¹⁸¹ There had been only nine prosecutions between 1945 and 1977 (Jordan, pp. 40–41.)

¹⁸² Hampton, *Disability and the Welfare State in Britain*, p. 196.

In 1974, the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) had been set up as a separate entity from the government but held to account by the Secretaries of State for Employment, Scotland and Wales to “run the public employment and training services”.¹⁸³ The MSC comprised of ten members including “a chairman, 3 members appointed after consultation with the TUC [Trades Union Congress], 3 after consultation with the CBI [Confederation of British Industry], 2 after consultation with local authority associations and 1 with professional education interests”, who each served a three-year term.¹⁸⁴ Working through the Employment Services Agency and the Training Services Agency, the MSC supported both individuals wishing to train and enter employment and employers looking to recruit.¹⁸⁵ Following the decision in 1975 to retain the quota due to the political climate, the scheme came under scrutiny once again in 1978 in the MSC with an aim to make policy recommendations in 1980. The MSC positioned itself away from the quota scheme, focusing on the promotion of “positive policies” to increase “contact with employers to encourage better understanding and use of the work potential of disabled people”, as an educational campaign to encourage employers to employ disabled people.¹⁸⁶

In response to the MSC’s circulated discussion document on the quota scheme, the Disability Alliance declared that the quota scheme was a “failure” due to the lack of enforcement from the employment services.¹⁸⁷ The Disability Alliance argued that employment was vital to granting disabled people equal access to society by eradicating

¹⁸³ Manpower Services Commission, ‘MSC Review and Plan’, 1977, The National Archives, ET2/44.

¹⁸⁴ Manpower Services Commission, ‘MSC Review and Plan’.

¹⁸⁵ Manpower Services Commission, ‘MSC Review and Plan’.

¹⁸⁶ Manpower Services Commission, ‘MSC Review and Plan’.

¹⁸⁷ Disability Alliance, ‘MSC’S Discussion Document on the Quota Scheme’, 1980, Peter Townsend Collection, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex, File 78.06.

financial hardship through full participation in the labour market.¹⁸⁸ The quota, they argued, had been the “cornerstone of employment policies for the disabled since 1944” and that strengthening the scheme was fundamental to improving policy alongside statutory protection for disabled people, rather than a combination of statutory protection and non-statutory programmes centred on encouragement and assistance that the MSC proposed as an alternative.¹⁸⁹

The Disability Alliance highlighted prevailing issues with the quota scheme, such as the decision of employment left to the employer’s discretion on the suitability of a candidate, the practice of issuing bulk permits as well as lack of enforcement.¹⁹⁰ They pointed to these issues as the reason that numbers of disabled people joining the register had declined, leading to the claims from many firms that while they appeared to be below quota, they “may in fact be employing a substantial number of unregistered disabled people”.¹⁹¹ This argument was made by the Deputy Director of Personnel, W L R E Gilchrist, of the JLP in 1981 in response to a readers’ letter asking for information on numbers of disabled people in employment. Gilchrist stated: “Our medical records demonstrate a much wider, through unquantifiable, number of people with varying

¹⁸⁸ Disability Alliance, ‘Comments on the Manpower Services Commission’s Discussion Document “The Quota Scheme for the Employment of Disabled People”’, 1980, Peter Townsend Collection, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex, File 78.06.

¹⁸⁹ Disability Alliance, ‘Comments on the Manpower Services Commission’s Discussion Document “The Quota Scheme for the Employment of Disabled People”’.

¹⁹⁰ Disability Alliance, ‘Comments on the Manpower Services Commission’s Discussion Document “The Quota Scheme for the Employment of Disabled People”’.

¹⁹¹ Disability Alliance, ‘Comments on the Manpower Services Commission’s Discussion Document “The Quota Scheme for the Employment of Disabled People”’.

disabilities for whom the Partnership has satisfactorily been able to provide employment”.¹⁹²

In 1979, the Disability Alliance published *A New Employment Programme Wanted for Disabled People* by David Jordan which called for changes to the quota system, investment in sheltered workshops and a review of the adult training centres.¹⁹³ Jordan argued that the position of the disabled in the labour market was “unlikely to improve unless the policies for promoting disabled employment are overhauled and given a cutting edge” due to the economic recession and continued levels of high unemployment.¹⁹⁴ Suggested changes to the quota included the removal of permits which allowed employers to avoid compliance and monetary penalties for businesses that did not comply which would be used to improvement employment opportunities for disabled people.¹⁹⁵ Instead, following their review, the MSC recommended that the quota scheme be removed and replaced with a law that would “require employers to take reasonable steps to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people” with a linked Code of Practice.¹⁹⁶ However, the process stalled, and the quota system remained in place, but a voluntary code of practice was published.

As part of their continued “positive policies” campaign, the MSC launched The Fit for Work Award Scheme in 1979.¹⁹⁷ The scheme was launched with the support of the

¹⁹² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Response by W L R E Gilchrist to “Disabled” by Douglas B’, *The Gazette*, 11 July 1981, section Readers’ letters, p. 509.

¹⁹³ Jordan, pp. 54–55.

¹⁹⁴ Jordan, p. 40.

¹⁹⁵ Jordan, p. 54.

¹⁹⁶ Disability Alliance, ‘Employment Services for People with Disabilities’, in *Disability Rights Handbook for 1983, 1982*.

¹⁹⁷ ‘Fit for Work’, *Daily Mail* (19 September 1979), 25902 edition, p. 10.

government, TUC and CBI.¹⁹⁸ The scheme built on a previous campaign, “Positive Policies” which had launched in 1977 but was reported by the MSC to have had little impact as “only one in five employers contacted by the MSC remembered having received and read the literature”.¹⁹⁹ The new scheme was advertised nationally in newspapers and the advert for nominations listed historical figures such as Horatio Nelson, Helen Keller and Julius Caesar, asking “Did you know all these people were disabled?”.²⁰⁰ The advert argued that “No-one would question their ability to contribute. And that’s true of most disabled workers today – disabled they might be, unable they’re not”.²⁰¹

The Fit for Work Award Scheme exemplified the MSC’s emphasis on encouragement over enforcement of the quota by rewarding up to one hundred firms a year for good employment policies with a trophy, wall plaque and citation in a presentation case. Additionally, a travelling train exhibition titled ‘Fit for Work’ was launched to encourage “employers to provide more opportunities for disabled people”.²⁰² The ‘Fit for Work’ Award and exhibition were part of wider movement by the MSC and Government to improve employers’ education and attempt to persuade them to take on disabled employees through the awards which attempted to increase the status of businesses that exceeded targets or exemplified good practice.²⁰³ While in place for eleven years, the ‘Fit for Work’ scheme was reported to have had “little impact”.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁸ ‘Fit for Work’.

¹⁹⁹ Thornton and Lunt, II, p. 28.

²⁰⁰ ‘Fit for Work’.

²⁰¹ ‘Fit for Work’.

²⁰² ‘Fit for Work’, *Financial Times* (9 October 1979), 27986 edition.

²⁰³ Thornton and Lunt, II, p. 26.

²⁰⁴ Thornton and Lunt, II, p. 28.

Access and opportunities for the employment of disabled people continued to be a challenge for the government as voluntary schemes continued to fail to encourage employers to meet their quota requirements. The Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People was launched in a speech by Margaret Thatcher in November 1984.²⁰⁵ Thatcher stated, “You launch a Code, and especially a voluntary Code, with a generous fund of goodwill”, which demonstrated the government’s continued commitment to a policy of persuasion, using voluntary schemes to encourage employers over compulsion through legal action and prosecution with regard to the employment of disabled people.²⁰⁶ Thatcher continued, stating: “We are all united in our determination to improve the employment opportunities for disabled people, and to help them play a full part in the economic life – as well as the social and cultural life – of our community”.²⁰⁷ The Code of Good Practice aimed to persuade employers that “disabled people are productive workers”.²⁰⁸

The Code was divided into two parts, the first of which targeted senior management and recommended specific employment policies, as well as reminding them of their duty to fulfil the quota, to help with the employment of disabled people.²⁰⁹ The second part was aimed at personnel and other managers offering guidelines which included “have an open on mind on jobs which disabled people can do”, to “avoid the assumption that disabled people are going to cause problems”, and ‘assess job and

²⁰⁵ Margaret Thatcher, ‘Speech on Employment of Disabled People’, *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 1984 <<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105788>> [accessed 4 October 2023].

²⁰⁶ Thatcher.

²⁰⁷ Thatcher.

²⁰⁸ Thornton and Lunt, II, p. 29.

²⁰⁹ Manpower Services Commission, ‘Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People’, 1984, The National Archives, FD 7/1946.

career prospects flexibly”.²¹⁰ The Code also attempted to tackle concerns that employers might have such as safety at work, general standards of attendance and health, eligibility for pension schemes, alterations to premises and equipment, communications with staff and management, manual dexterity and physical effort.²¹¹ Ultimately, the code of conduct failed to reach the majority of employers and was criticised for its focus toward the persuasion of employers, rather than the setting of meaningful targets or measuring of achievement.²¹²

Disability Manifesto published *An Agenda for the 1990s* in 1991 developed and supported by organisations such as the Disability Alliance, Greater London Association of Disabled People, MENCAP, Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, among others. The Agenda called for anti-discrimination legislation that would cover “employment and training, education, access to places used by the public, housing, transport, the facilitation of communication and the provision of goods, services and facilities”.²¹³ In addition to the anti-discrimination legislation which would provide equal opportunities on the job market for disabled people, the Agenda called for the quota system to be “enhanced and strengthened” and for businesses to be fined for not fulfilling their obligation.²¹⁴ The fines, they argued, would be placed into a fund for employers to use “to help provide access and aids for disabled people” which would encourage employers to meet the quota and individuals to join the register.²¹⁵ The

²¹⁰ Manpower Services Commission, ‘Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People’.

²¹¹ Manpower Services Commission, ‘Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People’.

²¹² Thornton and Lunt, II, p. 29.

²¹³ Disability Manifesto, ‘An Agenda for the 1990s’, 1991, Peter Townsend Collection, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex, Box 79.

²¹⁴ Disability Manifesto.

²¹⁵ Disability Manifesto.

Agenda also called for a statutory duty to be placed on employers to comply with the MSC Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People.

Despite ongoing discussions about the role of the quota by the MSC and organisations such as the Disability Alliance, the scheme was not being publicised widely. In 1990, the Government published findings of research conducted with employers which found “over one-quarter of respondents had not heard of the scheme, while a further tenth had, but were not familiar with its requirements”.²¹⁶ Additionally, the number of people joining the register continued to decline because disabled people “believed it a waste of time” and the Department of Employment continued to not enforce quota obligations which reinforced that belief.²¹⁷ The quota scheme was then abolished in 1994.²¹⁸

Originally used as a reformed version of the ‘Fit for Work’ award scheme, the ‘two ticks’ symbol was introduced in 1990 to continue to encourage businesses to meet the quota, however, the symbol outlasted the quota scheme. Instead of being nominated and receiving an award to use the ‘Fit for Work’ symbol, employers could adopt the ‘two ticks’ symbol following discussions with Employment Services and demonstration of “an organisational commitment to good employment opportunities for disabled people”.²¹⁹ This was demonstrated through five commitments which included guaranteed interviews for disabled applicants who met the minimum criteria, ensuring a worker was kept in employment if they became disabled, at least one consultation annually about work requirements for each disabled employee, informing all employees of plans and progress,

²¹⁶ Thornton and Lunt, II, p. 12.

²¹⁷ Thornton and Lunt, II, p. 12.

²¹⁸ Borsay, p. 205.

²¹⁹ Thornton and Lunt, II, p. 29.

and improved disability awareness among employees.²²⁰ Adverts for the scheme stated that the ‘two ticks’ symbol demonstrated that employers demonstrated an open mind and that “you concentrate on people’s abilities, not their disabilities”.²²¹ By the end of 1994, approximately eight-hundred organisations were displaying the symbol,²²² and in 1997 M&S were granted permission to use the ‘two-tick’ symbol.²²³ The Equal Opportunities Manager, Sheena Stockdale, described the function of the symbol on job adverts as demonstrating to disabled people that “they know they are not wasting their time by applying”.²²⁴

As with previous award schemes, the John Lewis Partnership demonstrated minimal visible engagement. A reader’s letter in 2003 queried the JLP’s position, stating: “Enlightened companies have a ‘positive attitude about disabled people (Two Ticks)’. What is, if any, the policy of the John Lewis Partnership? It appears to be a ‘one paragraph’ policy on discrimination” and accusing the JLP of discriminating against their disabled staff, arguing that customers would boycott the business if they were aware how badly they were treated.²²⁵ The response from the Director of Personnel, Andy Street, argued that the JLP’s approach was not to have a “specific policy” but to make sure that “our overall approach to discrimination encompasses disability” and referred to the setting up of the ‘Diversity Strategy Group’ to help improve their overall approach.²²⁶

²²⁰ Thornton and Lunt, II, p. 29.

²²¹ ‘Positive about Disabled People’, *Daily Mail*, 7 March 1994, p. 22.

²²² William Underhill, ‘Firms Blame Reluctance by Job-Seekers’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 December 1994, p. 33.

²²³ ‘Two Ticks for Commitment to the Disabled’, *St Michael News*, February 1997, pp. 3–8.

²²⁴ ‘Two Ticks for Commitment to the Disabled’, p. 8.

²²⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Cripple’, *The Gazette*, 21 June 2003, section Readers’ letters, p. 11.

²²⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Response by Andy Street to “Disabled Partners” by Cripple’, *The Gazette*, 21 June 2003, p. 11.

The reluctance to take part in broader national schemes involving diversity was also shown through the JLP's initial refusal to take part in "ethnic monitoring" which was encouraged by Government-sponsored bodies to monitor the effectiveness of anti-discrimination measures.²²⁷ The Partnership justified its decision not to "keep records of the ethnic origins of job applicants and employees" by arguing that "we were confident in our ability to uphold our rejection of discrimination without feeling the need to demonstrate it to others" and that if there were issues these could be reported through the *Gazette* or local *Chronicle*, registry system or committees for communication.²²⁸ The business came under increasing pressure to begin some form of record-keeping as more employers, including their retail competitors, instated monitoring systems. In 1995, the JLP relented, stating that "Our motives are misunderstood. There is the suggestion that we may have something to hide. This, of course, is not true but we are no longer able to provide answers which convince others [...]"²²⁹ However, this approach towards diversity in the JLP demonstrated the business' reliance on its own internal workings, holding the Partnership accountable only to the constitution and the democratic systems, which as seen through the questioning reader's letter from "Cripple", were not always sufficient.²³⁰

5.5 Introducing 'Access to Work'

Following the end of the quota scheme, the 'Access to Work' employment scheme brought the existing government schemes, that were in place to support disabled people,

²²⁷ Commission for Racial Equality, 'Ethnic Monitoring and Careers Services: A Good Practice Guide', 1991, p. 5 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28327812>> [accessed 7 November 2023].

²²⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Ethnic Monitoring', 25 March 1995, p. 201.

²²⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Ethnic Monitoring', p. 201.

²³⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Letter by Cripple'.

together in June 1994.²³¹ An earlier version of the scheme had been in place since the 1960s in the form of Sheltered Industrial Groups which was then replaced by the Sheltered Placement Schemes in 1985.²³² The scheme included flexible financial provision dependent on the individual's needs for payments toward support workers, equipment and adaptations, transport costs and alterations to work premises to support the employment of disabled people.²³³ The scheme was government funded and did not require any financial input from the employer. An individual could claim up to £21,000 over a five-year period and priority was given to the unemployed, but those who were self-employed or employed could also apply.²³⁴

The involvement of a third-party providing employment through the JLP however posed a challenge to the principles of the Partnership as individuals in the Access to Work scheme were not directly employed by the JLP and were therefore not a Partner. In 1994, the *Gazette* shared the success of Access to Work placements in one of their Waitrose branches in Crowborough.²³⁵ The main placement featured in the article involved Miss Mary Harris, who was described as having “a learning difficulty” and worked on the grocery section through the Access to Work Scheme, although the Branch Manager, Mr Tony Charlton, explained that the branch had been “involved with Employment Services” for seven years.²³⁶ East Sussex County Council, the local authority that oversaw the

²³¹ Disability Alliance, ‘Access to Work’, in *Disability Rights Handbook April 1994-April 1995*, 19th edn, 1994.

²³² Thornton and Lunt, II, pp. 31–32.

²³³ Disability Alliance, ‘Access to Work’.

²³⁴ Disability Alliance, ‘Access to Work’.

²³⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Something to Offer Each Other’, *The Gazette*, 14 May 1994, p. 383.

²³⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Something to Offer Each Other’, p. 383.

Crowborough area, had “unrivalled record” in terms of placing individuals with disabilities in employment, as Waitrose Crowborough was “one of 149 ‘host’ organisations”.²³⁷

Before undertaking any placements with the employment services and local authority, Charlton sought Partners’ opinions through both the Committee for Communications and Branch Council, to ensure that Partners and the business would commit to supporting schemes like Access to Work.²³⁸ Charlton stated that it was important to get commitment from in-branch Partners in particular because as branch manager, “I’d be asking them to achieve the same standards in terms of productivity, and customer service even though they might be having to offer additional help to a newly employed disabled person”.²³⁹ Feedback from both Mary Harris and her Section Manager was positive. Harris described the benefits, “There are ups and downs, but you would get that with any job. I felt I could not cope to start with, then I thought – I’ve got a job and I’ve got a flat and I wouldn’t be able to have it without the scheme”, summarising that the scheme was a “good one”.²⁴⁰ From the management perspective, section manager, Martin Lee, said of Mary Harris, “She’s just part of the team [...] She fits in well and can do nearly all the jobs our Partners can do. She’s resilient and she copes”.²⁴¹

While being described as able to do “nearly all the jobs our Partners can”, Harris was not classed as a Partner or a full member of the Partnership. Individuals on Access to Work placements were employed by the local Employment Services, who were responsible for pay and arranging placements. This employment arrangement, whilst

²³⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Something to Offer Each Other’, p. 383.

²³⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Something to Offer Each Other’, p. 383.

²³⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Something to Offer Each Other’, p. 383.

²⁴⁰ Mary Harris as quoted in The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Something to Offer Each Other’, p. 383.

²⁴¹ Martin Lee as quoted in The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Something to Offer Each Other’, p. 383.

satisfactory to the majority of employers, meant that in the JLP, individuals took on many of the responsibilities, but were unable to claim Partnership benefits, such as the bonus or have full access to the democratic structure. This positioning echoed the wider societal debates about full participation, equity, and citizenship for disabled people.

One of the Partnership benefits that posed as a potential barrier to full participation to the Partnership for disabled Partners was usage of the leisure properties. In the report of a 1992 Central Council debate, a councillor, Miss Green, had raised that:

“[...] the holiday centres provided virtually no facilities for disabled people. She understood Leckford Abbas could not accept anybody with a disability and at Odney it would be considered difficult. She was including not just physical, but also visual and hearing, disabilities”.²⁴²

The Director of Building and Services’, Mr J B G Carpenter, response was reported as “we were putting in a wheelchair ramp at Lullebrook [Odney] after Christmas”.²⁴³ It was only in 2006 during a refurbishment of rooms at Odney that a twin bedroom and bathroom designed especially for guests with disabilities was made available.²⁴⁴ The room included space for a wheelchair to manoeuvre, wider doors with an alarm and an accessible wet room.²⁴⁵ As part of the Partnership Benefit, limited access to the residential clubs meant that not all disabled Partners were unable to enjoy full membership to the Partnership.

However, the JLP continued to make efforts to engage disabled Partners, joining the Employers’ Forum on Disability in 1997 which was described as a “major organisation in the employment field’ with over two-hundred members “including most of our major

²⁴² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 23 November, Part 2’, *The Gazette*, 12 December 1992, p. 1180.

²⁴³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 23 November, Part 2’, p. 1180.

²⁴⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Colonial Living Arrives at Odney’, *The Gazette*, 8 July 2006, 5.

²⁴⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Colonial Living Arrives at Odney’.

retail competitors”.²⁴⁶ The Forum had been established in 1986 and brought together organisations, becoming an “authoritative voice on disability and the workplace”, which represented 22% of the workforce in the United Kingdom by 2003.²⁴⁷ In the 1999 revision of the constitution, a new rule was added which expanded on the historic Rule 48 to state that “The Partnership employs disabled people in suitable vacancies and offers them appropriate training and careers”.²⁴⁸ Developments in equal opportunities policies and equality training demonstrated a shift in workplace culture toward the employment of disabled people.

The role of third sector organisations became increasingly publicised within the house magazines of JLP, JS Sainsbury and M&S. Oliver and Barnes argued that “privatization [was] not a new phenomenon” in welfare state services but increased following financial crises of the 1990s and 2000s as governments reduced state spending on welfare service in favour of a “mixed economy of welfare”.²⁴⁹ The retailers partnered with organisations such as the Shaw Trust, STATUS and Mencap to provide work opportunities for disabled people.²⁵⁰ These opportunities varied from short-term placements to introduce individuals who had been out of work for a period back into the work environment to apprenticeships or longer-term placements leading to direct employment.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Learning from Statistics’, p. 535.

²⁴⁷ M Seed, ‘Employers’ Forum on Disability’, *Occupation Medicine*, 53.2 (2003), p. 152.

²⁴⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership, August 1999 Revised Draft (Supplement)’, p. 14.

²⁴⁹ Oliver and Barnes, pp. 147–48.

²⁵⁰ Examples include: ‘Mencap’s Pathway to Employment’, *JS Journal*, June 1985, p. 9; ‘Jobs with Status’, *JS Journal*, October 1997, p. 14; The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Reports to the Chairman’, *The Gazette*, 16 July 2005, p. 16.

²⁵¹ ‘You Can Do All Sorts of Things’, *Sainsbury Journal*, October 2008, p. 21; ‘Mencap’s Pathway to Employment’, p. 9.

Similar to the challenges posed by the Access to Work scheme, these different types of placements contested some of the Partnership's principles of citizenship, with non-Partners fulfilling Partnership roles. Many placements could be categorised as charitable work, for example fifteen-week placements with the Shaw Trust that aimed to support "disabled and disadvantaged people find jobs and live more independently" through skills-based training which boosted confidence and work experience.²⁵² Throughout this period, however, the JLP was becoming more comfortable with outsourcing Partnership work to non-Partner workers with the closure of in-branch customer call centres and agreements between Welcome Break and Waitrose.²⁵³

5.6 Conclusion

Disability posed a similar challenge to the Partnership as it did for the government of the United Kingdom in the postwar period, by challenging ideas of citizenship and full participation. The JLP, while acting on par with its competitors for the majority of the period, had additional pressures due to its system of co-ownership and democracy when employing disabled Partners. This challenge has not been well documented however it showed many similarities with the retailers J S Sainsbury and Marks & Spencer, who aimed to position themselves as caring and responsible employers. The retailers, alongside other businesses, struggled to meet quota obligations which meant applying for permits to legally avoid fulfilling their quota duty.

²⁵² 'Shaw Trust Placement', *The Waitrose Chronicle*, 11 February 2011, 12.

²⁵³ *Inside John Lewis*, dir. by Elizabeth Bonner Allan (BBC 4, 2010); Salaman and Storey, p. 125.

While slow to get involved in schemes of public recognition, such as Fit for Work and Two Ticks, the JLP has since established itself as leader amongst employers for their support and inclusion policies towards disabled applicants and Partners. The wider political move toward work-based placements through the Access to Work scheme or non-governmental organisations challenged the Partnership's ideals of citizenship, in a similar way to outsourcing. Individuals employed indirectly by the JLP were unable to enjoy the full benefits of Partnership membership, however this shifted in the twenty-first century as the business invested in its internal processes.

Ultimately, the JLP's welfare and employment policies were ahead of many employers in the United Kingdom. The Partnership relied on its constitution when developing employment policy and were reluctant to engage with wider national schemes. However, whilst the JLP were innovators, the ultimate result was that disabled Partners faced difficulties in enjoying the full benefits of Partnership as demonstrated through the limited access to leisure properties. This meant that membership to the JLP could not be experienced equally by all Partners, therefore challenging their vision of citizenship.

6 The Partnership under Strain

6.1 Introduction

The John Lewis Partnership (JLP) have historically used the term 'Partner' to describe their employees due to the nature of the ownership structure. The title of 'Partner' signified their status as co-owners of the business, entitled them to Partnership Bonus and a right to a say in the running of the Partnership through the democratic structures as cemented in the first and second trust settlements and the constitution. The organisational structure of the JLP has been described as what makes the Partnership different from other employers and focused on the "happiness of all its members".¹

Membership to the John Lewis Partnership has undergone many changes since 1964. As citizens in a democracy, the institutions have shifted in moves to modernise and adapted to attempt to accommodate a business much larger than the experiment designed by Spedan Lewis. The retail landscape has changed dramatically since the early days of the Partnership, away from large physical premises towards vast online storefronts. Arguably the navigation of such significant shifts required significant alterations to the business and therefore, Partners. However, while Partners were considered similar to citizens in a democracy, they were also labelled as co-owners and members of a co-operative society of producers. This created further complexity of Partnership membership, where management across the JLP could be held directly to account by Partners, who were not only answerable as citizens but as shareholders.

¹ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 31.

While acting as citizens in a democracy, Partners also had a responsibility to the business as co-owners. Each Partner would gain the benefits, but also share the responsibilities of ownership with the expectation of putting the business first through fulfilled employment. The duty of Partners to make decisions that benefitted the business highlighted key tensions in the identity of Partners who had the ability to shape their own working lives but who were also expected to prioritise their duty to the business over personal wants or needs. These tensions are explored in this chapter using two examples, the debates on Sunday trading and demutualisation, from the 1990s which tested the relationship between citizens' rights and managerial responsibilities. Both instances demonstrate the managerial emphasis on duty and obligation of non-management Partners, while continuing to stress the importance of democratic nature of the JLP and the benefits of the model.

The final section of this chapter will then focus on modernisation. Following the demutualisation debate, a number of changes were instigated to help develop the democracy in the expanding business such as the introduction of the Partnership Survey in 2004.² Despite undergoing expansion, the democratic structures of the JLP had remained largely unchanged until the 2000s which heralded an era of modernisation and change for Partnership. This period of modernisation which aimed to simplify and democratise the business has, however, diluted some of the democratic aspects of the Partnership, limiting some Partners' ability to engage with ownership structure in a meaningful way.

² Salaman and Storey, p. 80.

6.2 Co-ownership and Participation in the JLP

The description of the John Lewis Partnership, as published in the in-house publication, *The Gazette*, declared that “The Partnership is a cooperative society of producers”.³ As producers in a cooperative society, Partners were able to and encouraged to experience a degree of ownership which would influence their decisions and actions as owners of a business. The experience of ownership was expected to influence Partners to make decisions that would benefit the business as they would then experience the benefit for themselves. Peter Lewis, chairman between 1972 and 1993, stated in the announcement for Partnership bonus for year 1979-80 that “the Partnership not merely preserves its business competitiveness, which of course it must do, but at the same time earns for Partners the margins of advantage that more nearly corresponds to the rewards of working for oneself”.⁴

As described by Peter Lewis, Partners experienced these rewards of ownership through the sharing of gain, primarily the Partnership Bonus. Other forms of sharing profits included minimum income supplements, children’s allowances, and leisure provision, all of which did not impact rates of pay; these were considered additional.⁵ However, Spedan Lewis preferred the term ‘Partnership Benefit’ to ‘Profit-Sharing’ as he argued that there were key differences between the schemes. Lewis argued that ‘profit-sharing’ referred to “a system of business in which profit is shared between workers and owners of capital”, but the Partnership system put “every worker in the position of partner

³ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Gazette*, 11 January 1964, 1222.

⁴ ‘Partnership Bonus 1979-80’, *The Gazette*, 8 March 1980, p. 131.

⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 33.

and thus giving him exactly the benefit a partner does derive from partnership”.⁶ These monetary benefits fluctuated in form throughout the history of JLP, beginning as share promises and then moving towards the first wholly cash paid bonus in 1970.⁷

Spedan Lewis had been keen to stress that with the Partnership Benefit, as the bonus was called at the time of first distribution in 1920, came with responsibility. He drew up a proposal for a system of fines for if Partners were found to have taken advantage of their “fellow-owners, by error or design”.⁸ Fines were deducted from pay for errors such as mischarging and till losses and Partners were not able to join the profit-sharing scheme unless they signed his proposal.⁹ Where Partners stole from the business, summaries of the action taken were published in *The Gazette* highlighting instances where Partners were argued to have effectively stolen from themselves.¹⁰ The responsibilities of co-ownership were set out to define how Partners should behave towards each other, customers, suppliers and their relationship towards the business as a whole.

While receiving the advantages of ownership, Partners were also expected to consider the responsibilities as co-owners, to ensure that the business could continue to provide for future Partners as well as those currently employed. Cathcart argued that “the structure of co-ownership” in the Partnership was used to legitimise “an emphasis of profit above all else, and to stress that although decisions may not be in the best interest of individuals, they were in the interests of owners”.¹¹ This was reflected in Partnership

⁶ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 43.

⁷ Cox, p. 137.; See Appendix 3 for further details on Partnership Bonus between 1964 and 2014.

⁸ Cox, p. 60.

⁹ Cox, pp. 60–61.

¹⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Losses and Dishonesty’, *The Gazette*, 6 June 1964, 453.

¹¹ Cathcart, ‘Paradoxes of Participation: Non-Union Workplace Partnership in John Lewis’, p. 774.

literature where the importance of being a 'co-owner' and the responsibilities that the role entailed were stressed: "Every member shall do his best for the Partnership as if it were in the ordinary sense his own business. He shall not attempt to get from it any more than he sincerely believes to be his fair and just dues".¹²

The ideology of the Partnership was compounded in the constitution of the JLP which declared the ultimate aim of the Partnership to be "happiness in every way of all its Members with among them no more inequality in any respect whatever than shall seem to be necessary to the Partnership's efficiency in the service of the general community" as governed by the Chairman and members of the senior management team.¹³ This aim meant that the JLP aspired to ensure that the managed and management Partners were treated as equally as the natural hierarchy of the business would allow. Through different editions of the Partnership's constitution, the phrasing of this point has been revised however, the core principle of the happiness of members of the Partnership has been retained.

As well as impressing the need for Partners to think of the future of the business, Spedan Lewis also wanted to ensure that the Partnership was further safeguarded by ensuring that management would have the ability to make commercial decisions without impediment.¹⁴ This safeguard, built into the Partnership structure, aimed to ensure its longevity as both a business and experiment in industrial democracy; as described by Bernard Miller, "Countries continue whether or not their Governments are efficient, but

¹² The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 37.

¹³ 'Draft Articles of the Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership' (Appendix B) in John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 489.

¹⁴ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 23.

competitive businesses will sooner or later die if they are inefficient”.¹⁵ However, the democratic structures allowed Partners to hold management to account for their decisions. This was enabled through structures at each level of the business: Partnership journalism, Committees for Communication, Branch Councils, Central Council and later Partner Voice and Partnership Council, which enabled them to have a say in the running of the overall business.

Through these structures, Partners were able to hold the most senior members of management to account, up to and including the chairman, through their representatives at the Central Council. As previously described, in the extreme the Central Council had the power to remove the chairman from power.¹⁶ There was also a moral responsibility tied to the role of chairman through the constitution to “aim at increasing the constitutional and diminishing the monarchic element in [the Partnership’s] structure and conduct”.¹⁷ The Partnership had long described itself as a “constitutional monarchy” in *The Gazette* while declaring that the “supreme purpose of the whole organisation is to secure the fairest possible sharing by all members”.¹⁸ The ideology of the Partnership, through accountability, effectively controlled the business. Flanders et al. argued that “no individual, whatever his standing, can afford to disregard it; not even the Chairman – perhaps he least of all”.¹⁹ However, accountability depended on Partners taking an active role in the Partnership and its democracies to share in the knowledge and to be in the position to hold decision-makers to account.

¹⁵ Sir Bernard Miller, ‘Foreword’ in Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 17..

¹⁶ Salaman and Storey, p. 172.

¹⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 51.

¹⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The John Lewis Partnership’, *The Gazette*, 4 January 1964, p. 1198.

¹⁹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 188.

Members of management were more likely to be engaged with the ideology and democracy in the business. Flanders et al. argued that this was because of the obligations of accountability and freedom of criticism within the Partnership.²⁰ In the Central Council, elected members of management outnumbered those of non-management, however at Branch Council level, Flanders et al. reported that non-management Partners accounted for fifty per cent of all elect branch councillors.²¹ This demonstrated that non-management Partners were more engaged with the democracy on local issues that frequently impacted their day-to-day roles, however engagement at the local level was also described as an area of difficulty in the Partnership's more recent history.

Faced with changes to the break pattern for the late shift workers in Waitrose that would remove their hot-meal option and shorten their break, branch councillors sought the opinions of their teams to present at the upcoming meeting.²² During an interview, one retired councillor described an overall feeling of neutrality from the Partners in their branch with many not expressing opinions on the subject.²³ The councillor suspected that this was because the changes were to be made six months on, in the July of that year, so there was little engagement with the issue and he had to go to the meeting with only those feelings of neutrality to present. The amendment to the break pattern passed through the council and in the July, the councillor described Partners in branch as being furious. The councillor described that he and the branch manager had attempted to use

²⁰ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 183.

²¹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 71.

²² M Thomson, *Interview Conducted for 'From an "Experiment in Industrial Democracy" to "Driving the Difference": The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014'*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

²³ M Thomson.

this amendment as a test case – to see whether branch Partners were listening. The retired branch councillor expressed that:

“I was always disappointed in the amount – the percentage of people that work in Waitrose and potentially John Lewis who aren’t interested in the democracy – it’s just a job – they don’t care and maybe, it could be a majority – I’m not saying it is, as you might find that out in your travails but it’s a disappointingly large number of people who think the job is a job and ‘I’ve got better things to do than worry about all those frilly bits around the edges’.”²⁴

The branch councillor, and in this case the branch manager, were aware that the change to break patterns would impact many of the partners working in branch. However, the councillor felt bound to present the few opinions of neutrality presented to him, in his role as a representative in a constituency, despite personally having assumed that many of the branch would be unhappy once the changes when implemented.²⁵

The feeling of neutrality or reluctance to offer an opinion as described by the retired Waitrose Branch Councillor was also recognised by other interviewees. This was attributed to, in some cases, a lack of belief in the democratic system and the suggestion that constituents believed their opinion would not be held equal to that of a manager: “I mean people say, or they said at the time, oh it didn’t matter what you said or did, the management would always get what they wanted – but they didn’t always”.²⁶ Retired councillors were quick to dispel the idea that management ‘got what they wanted’ in interview, stating examples where management had either been unsuccessful or had adapted plans in response to feedback from councillors and Partners. While this demonstrated the strengths of the democracy to councillors, there were clearly gaps

²⁴ M Thomson.

²⁵ M Thomson.

²⁶ L Judd, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”’: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

between how Partners who were not involved perceived the outcomes of the structures, doubting the efficacy of the democracy.

In the pursuit of being 'responsible' co-owners, Partners were expected, at times, to make decisions that they as individuals might object to but that would benefit the business. This was most commonly expressed with regard to trading hours, which were a frequent topic of discussion at Branch Councils. The debate stemmed from arguments about what the business needed to make the most of the busy Christmas period and the impact on Partners' work-life balance.²⁷ Often, decisions on trading hours were made by Branch Councils, allowing Branch Councillors to dispute the trading hour proposals put forward by management, as described by an interviewee:

"They started to extend for the Christmas period and one of them was New Year's Eve and we'd had one New Year's Eve where the Thursday night being a late night, we didn't shut till 8 o'clock and we had to stay open till 8 o'clock and it was ridiculous by about half past 5 the place was empty. So the next time we had a Thursday 8 o'clock, we decided we were going to bring in an amendment to this to see if we could get it brought back and myself and a very good friend of mine did a lot of research, a lot of work and we were asking to see all the trading figures and everything else which at one time the then financial manager wasn't too happy about but I said we're on branch council, we need these figures, it's not fair. We can't bring an amendment if we don't have the same information as the managing director has so anyway, we were allowed to see these figures and we did get it closed at 6. Some people said he was going to do it anyway, but I don't know."²⁸

This experience of this Branch Councillor demonstrated that it was possible to challenge management decisions, however this depended on the ability of councillors and labour and availability of resource to counter the argument put forward by management, to argue that their option was ultimately more beneficial for the business.

²⁷ For example, 'Christmas and New Year trading arrangements' in 'Readers' letters', John Lewis Partnership, *The Gazette*, 80:35 (3 October 1998), p. 886.

²⁸ L Judd.

The effectiveness of a counterargument could depend on external pressures, such as the actions of high street competitors or broader societal shifts, such as Sunday trading. Partners were required to recognise the need to keep up with competitors, as co-owners of the JLP, risking their bonus and potentially the business if they failed to do so. However, changing trading hours had the potential to dilute the ‘Partnership difference’ by intruding on leisure time and impacting the working patterns of Partners. Management, alongside non-management Partners, attempted to push back against change to the retail sector, that posed a threat to membership of the Partnership as highlighted in discussion over leisure provision, raised in a previous chapter, and concerns for the vitality of the democracy. Whilst ultimately being unsuccessful in their opposition, debates over trading hours highlighted tensions in the business between the membership and co-ownership of Partners of the JLP.

6.3 The Sunday Trading Debate

Trading hours were a frequent topic discussed in the Readers’ Letters section of the *Gazette* between 1964 and 2014. Hours of opening were discussed in relation to Partner welfare but also the convenience of customers and speculative impact on the business’ profit, which engaged with Partners’ identity as co-owners. In 1964, the JLP shifted so that the majority of John Lewis branches traded five-days a week, giving branch-based Partners Sundays and Mondays as their days off.²⁹ By 2014, the majority of branches were trading seven-days a week with increased late-night opening for some

²⁹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 155..

as well.³⁰ The move to seven-day trading meant increased employment of part-time Partners to cover shifts throughout the week and risked disrupting the work schedules of long-serving Partners.

In *Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, the issue of five-day trading was examined as part of the research team's review of the management process.³¹ The case of five-day trading was used to examine how "management action, democratic action and outside pressures" contributed to and influenced the formation of Partnership policy.³² They argued that five-day trading was selected because of the "real conflicts of interest between trading and personnel considerations" and the involvement of Partnership institutions and individuals.³³ In the early 1990s, the JLP was faced with a similar problem in Sunday trading which increased trading to seven-days a week and the decision-making process involved management, the democratic structures, and external pressures, and similarly presented conflicts of interest. The main concern of Partners was the impact that extended opening would have on their leisure time, which in turn impacted how leisure could be run within the Partnership.

An early mention of Sunday trading occurred in the debate following the Chairman's address in 1966, when Central Councillor, Mr G W Thackray of George Henry Lee, queried the success of a discount business when trading on a bank holiday.³⁴ In his response, the Chairman, Sir Bernard Miller stated that:

³⁰ 'It's Time to Liberalise Our Outdated Sunday Trading Laws', *Talking Retail*, 16 June 2014 <<https://www.talkingretail.com/opinion/talking-points/time-liberalise-outdated-sunday-trading-laws-16-06-2014/>> [accessed 19 March 2024].

³¹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 154.

³² Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 154.

³³ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 154.

³⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'The Debate on the Chairman's Address', *The Gazette*, 4 June 1966, 457.

“Of course, if it became established all over the country that shops opened on [a] Bank Holiday the Partnership, probably, would not be able to buck the trend, as it were; but just as in the five-day week we have stuck our feet firmly in the ground of our policy so in anything like Sunday trading or Bank Holiday trading we should certainly not follow suit and, in fact, would do all we could to discourage this extension”.³⁵

This stance outlined by Sir Bernard Miller was echoed in the position taken by the subsequent chairmen, Peter Lewis, and Stuart Hampson, toward Sunday trading which became a recurring topic throughout all their premierships until legislation changed in 1994.

Discussions about Sunday trading were fuelled by changing social and cultural practices in England and Wales as well as a push for further economic growth. It was argued that Sunday was “increasingly perceived as part of the ‘weekend’, rather than a day in some way ‘holy’ or ‘set apart’ from other days”.³⁶ The shift was reported to have been encouraged by broad social changes including higher numbers of women working outside of the home which increased the need for shops to extend opening as women continued to “carry the burden of family shopping”.³⁷ Weekend-working was also becoming more prevalent and by 1987, 5.6 million people were working over the weekend, including Sundays, in the catering, leisure and transport sectors.³⁸ The legal context was different in Scotland where Sunday trading was unregulated and only twenty-five per cent of shops opened on a Sunday, however it was argued that “Shopping

³⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Debate on the Chairman’s Address’.

³⁶ Philip Richter, ‘Seven Days’ Trading Make One Weak? The Sunday Trading Issue as an Index of Secularization’, *British Journal of Sociology*, 1994, pp. 333–48 (p. 334).

³⁷ Imelda Maher, ‘The New Sunday: Reregulating Sunday Trading’, *Modern Law Review*, 58.1 (1995), pp. 72–86 (p. 73).

³⁸ Steve John, *The Persuaders: When Lobbyists Matter* (Springer, 2002), p. 80.

patterns in Scotland [were] very different from those in England” due to a lower density population, lower levels of car ownership and higher attendance in church.³⁹

Irregularities and inconsistencies in the Shops Act 1950 encouraged debate and attracted attention of politicians, consumers, and retailers alike. The Shops Act 1950 specified that shops were:

“Not allowed to open on Sundays except for the sale of: intoxicating liquors; meals and refreshments (but not fish and chips); newly cooked provisions; sweets, chocolates, sugar confectionery, ice cream and table waters; fruit and vegetables (but not canned or bottled); milk and cream (but not tinned or dried); tobacco and smokers’ requisites; medicines; newspapers and magazines”.⁴⁰

Inconsistencies within the Shops Act meant that many Sunday and late-night shoppers were found to have broken rules with their purchases. Research published by Wrigley, Guy and Dunn in 1984, which used evidence from the Cardiff Consumer Panel, found that over twenty-four weeks, “42 per cent of Sunday food and grocery purchases were of illegal products” which they argued showed “widespread bending or flouting of the current (very complex) legislation”.⁴¹ However, the Shops Act was difficult to enforce because it “was not sufficient to show the shop had been open, it had to be selling prohibited goods”.⁴²

In an address at a seminar focused on shop hours, Mr I A J Anderson, the Director of Trading Department Stores of the JLP, stressed that the Home Office were not concerned with the impact that retailers breaking the law had on other shops, stating that: “The Home Office is not concerned with shopkeeping. It understands nothing about it.

³⁹ Maclennan, ‘House of Commons Debate’, 1993, vol 233, col 842.

⁴⁰ Neil Wrigley, Cliff Guy, and Richard Dunn, ‘Sunday and Late-Night Shopping in a British City: Evidence from the Cardiff Consumer Panel’, *Area*, 16.3 (1984), pp. 236–40 (p. 238).

⁴¹ Wrigley, Guy, and Dunn, p. 238.

⁴² Maher, p. 74.

Why should it? How could it? The Home Office is desperately concerned with law enforcement”.⁴³ He argued that the Home Office were mostly concerned with the number of retailers flouting the Sunday trading laws rather than its broader impact on the sector.⁴⁴ However, the Thatcher government became increasingly interested in the laws around Sunday trading in a domestic agenda powered by deregulation.

In 1985, the Thatcher government aimed to deregulate Sunday trading with the Shops Bill which would have replaced the Shops Act 1950, however, MPs faced strong public opposition to total deregulation which led to a defeat at the second reading.⁴⁵ In response to the government’s move to deregulate Sunday trading, two key groups emerged as campaigners opposing and supporting reform: The Keep Sunday Special Campaign (KSSC) opposed by the Shopping Hours Reform Council (SHRC).⁴⁶ KSSC had been set up in 1985 to campaign against the proposed changes and was back by trade unions, small and medium-sized companies, churches and trade associations.⁴⁷ Comparatively, SHRC was formed as a coalition of retailers, following the defeat of the government’s proposals.⁴⁸ Additional campaign groups “circled on the fringes: Outlets Providing Everyday Needs (OPEN), Retailers for Shops Act Reform (RSAR) and Sort out Sunday (SOS)”.⁴⁹

The KSSC was described by the *Daily Telegraph* as consisting of an “alliance of Seventh Day Separatists: Labour MPs for shop-workers, Tories for the family unit and

⁴³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Sunday Trading’, *The Gazette*, 6 November 1982, p. 896.

⁴⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Sunday Trading’, p. 896.

⁴⁵ John, p. 74.

⁴⁶ John, p. 75.

⁴⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘A Decision for Parliament (Supplement)’, *The Gazette*, 6 November 1993, p. iii.

⁴⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘A Decision for Parliament (Supplement)’, p. iii.

⁴⁹ John, p. 75.

church goes from all quarters”.⁵⁰ While the KSSC had the support of ‘old-style’ Labour MPs, the campaign did not appeal to the voter that Labour was increasingly trying to reach; “the southern, middle-class voter and businesses” who would benefit more from the reforms supported by the SHRC.⁵¹ The SHRC, who campaigned for partial deregulation, were more adaptable and willing to compromise which meant they gained wider support and appealed to a larger audience.⁵²

Retailers weighed in on the debate and joined campaigns that supported their business aims and aligned with their visions for the future of shopping. Sainsbury’s supported a reform of the Sunday trading laws, as did Marks and Spencer which supported the RSAR campaign.⁵³ The JLP publicly declared their support for the KSSC late although they had supported the aims of the campaign privately.⁵⁴ Pragmatic Partners and Councillors had suggested that the Partnership should plan for the inevitable future of extended opening hours and Sunday trading and act to not “kill the goose that lays the golden eggs – the geese being the front-line troops; the sales assistants”.⁵⁵

Following the defeat of the proposal under Thatcher to deregulate Sunday trading law, retailers in the Do-It-Yourself sector, such as B&Q, had launched litigation which “challenged the powers of local authorities to seek injunctions to enforce the Act and they sought to challenge the validity of the Act under EC [European Community] law”.⁵⁶ The

⁵⁰ Robert Hardman, ‘Commons Sketch: Rumbo Buys Time in Shopping Row’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 November 1991.

⁵¹ John, p. 81.

⁵² Catherine Barnard, ‘Sunday Trading: A Drama in Five Acts’, *The Modern Law Review*, 57.3 (1994), pp. 449–60 (p. 460).

⁵³ John, p. 77.

⁵⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘A Decision for Parliament (Supplement)’.

⁵⁵ Mrs D Travis in The John Lewis Partnership, *The Gazette*, 25 May 1985, p. 383.

⁵⁶ Maher, p. 75.

legal action, which lasted seven years, made the Act practically unenforceable and “By the time the 1994 Bill was published, about 40 per cent of shops were engaged in Sunday trading”.⁵⁷

While the department and grocery stores were both impacted by illegal Sunday trading, it was Waitrose that felt the brunt of the impact. Between October 1991 and 1993, “the percentage of shoppers visiting multiple food retailers on any Sunday over any 12-week period was reported to have risen from 34 per cent to 75 per cent”.⁵⁸ As Sunday became an increasingly popular shopping day, David Felwick, Director of Trading (Food), argued that while an “unpalatable conclusion for some Partners” as the Partnership had “argued so strongly against opening our shops”, Sunday trading would in the future become important to the business.⁵⁹

The Partnership’s overall stance on Sunday trading was re-evaluated when Parliament accepted partial deregulation on Sundays in 1994 and Sunday trading was discussed in a Central Council debate.⁶⁰ The chairman and senior management caused “something of a moral dilemma” among some councillors who had understood the JLP to be against the proposal, up to this point: “First, because it was illegal and because under the circumstances we felt it commercially undesirable. Second, it was unethical, and third, it was morally wrong”.⁶¹ However, the Directors of Trading for Food and Department Stores firmly held their competitors responsible for the change in attitude, suggesting that

⁵⁷ Maher, p. 75.

⁵⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 7 February, Part 1’, *The Gazette*, 19 February 1994, p. 75.

⁵⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 7 February, Part 1’, p. 75.

⁶⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 7 February, Part 1’, p. 73.

⁶¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 7 February, Part 1’, p. 73.

the senior management were bound by the ideas and responsibilities of co-ownership as much as Partners on the shopfloor. Mr B A O'Callaghan, Director of Trading for Department Stores, stated that he:

“[...] did not welcome the prospect of opening a Partnership department store on a Sunday. Neither he nor heads of branch wished to do so, but we required that freedom if we were to possess a full competitive response [...] Marks & Spencer trading on four Sundays before Christmas would itself prompt other retailers to follow”.⁶²

This was similarly echoed by the deputy chairman, Mr D E Young, who reassured Partners that “There had been no intention in the wording of the proposal to suggest that the Partnership welcomed Sunday trading. He had said that he was disappointed at the decision Parliament had reached, but we could not ignore reality”.⁶³ Some Partners were resigned as the JLP moved to keep up with its competitors; “Well, we knew it was going to have to be because everywhere in Sheffield or everywhere in the country you know they were working full weeks so it just became the, we couldn't not do it”.⁶⁴

The change was not immediate across the Partnership and while Waitrose began regular Sunday trading in 1994, the department stores moved to seven-day trading over a longer transitional period, however concerns were voiced about how changes would impact Partners different aspects of Partnership life. As Sunday trading became the norm for retailers, the impact of seven-day trading on leisure and amenities provided by the Partnership was frequently debated. When discussing High Wycombe's John Lewis branch moving to seven-day trading, Phillip Medina, member of the Committee for Clubs and Social Activities, argued that “with the advance of seven-day trading it was going to

⁶² The John Lewis Partnership, 'Summary of Proceedings on 7 February, Part 1', pp. 75–76.

⁶³ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Summary of Proceedings on 7 February, Part 1', p. 79.

⁶⁴ D Greenway.

get hard for us to indulge in other forms of social activities”.⁶⁵ However, this was challenged by another committee member, who argued that “Waitrose had not demonstrated any decline in social activities” and that the grocery-side of the business had moved to seven-day trading in 1994.⁶⁶ While involvement in social activities was not seen to decline, the types of activities that Partners were involved in visibly shifted. The long-standing clubs of the JLP, such as the Sabeema Art Club, continued but some of the local branch-based societies felt the impact of the longer trading hours, as described by an interviewee:

“When we went from having Sundays and Mondays off, it [Garden Society] folded and a lot of the others folded because there wasn’t a, you know people were split up, and working just from Monday to Saturday, they were working between different things. And that did away with a lot of things like that which was a shame really...”⁶⁷

Another aspect that Partners feared would be impacted by the increased trading hours was the democracy. In the Chairman’s annual speech to the Central Council, a Councillor for Waitrose, Mrs A Gough, asked what the impact of longer trading hours would be on the democracy.⁶⁸ In the lengthening of trading hours, Mrs Gough saw the potential of erosion of the democracy due to councillors “feeling unable to devote sufficient time to their democratic duties”.⁶⁹ While the chairman, Stuart Hampson, did not see provision of time as an issue, in his response he highlighted potential difficulties of communication between Councillors and constituents due to changing working patterns, which he stated that “we do need to look at that and to work better means of providing

⁶⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report of the Committee for Clubs and Social Activities’, p. 1314.

⁶⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report of the Committee for Clubs and Social Activities’, p. 1314.

⁶⁷ D Greenway.

⁶⁸ ‘The Chairman at Central Council’, *The Gazette*, 25 May 1996, p. 415.

⁶⁹ ‘The Chairman at Central Council’, p. 415.

communication from Councillor to constituent”.⁷⁰ This exchange demonstrated the wider impact of extended trading hours in the business and some of the Partnership’s upcoming challenges to its democratic structure due to the changing retail landscape. At the time of this exchange, Waitrose was already trading on Sundays, and it was declared in the Chairman’s speech that out-of-town department stores would be moving toward Sunday opening later that year, without processes to safeguard the democracy in place.

The case of Sunday trading demonstrated how the safeguards of the Partnership that ensured the longevity and the business’ ability to compete bound management as well as non-management Partners. Changes to trading hours had the potential to impact the individual character of the Partnership however, the overriding consideration for Partners was the future of the business. This case highlights how senior management initially attempted to challenge government policy but that ultimately all Partners needed to prioritise the financial security of the business over individual wants or needs.

6.4 “Let’s sell now, make a few pounds”: The Demutualisation Debate in the JLP

As with the case of Sunday trading, the demutualisation debate was fuelled by external factors, as the move to demutualise became a popular news story in the 1990s. The contemporary debate highlighted a previously untested aspect of ownership in the JLP; the option to sell the business. The issue was debated fiercely in the Readers’ Letters section of *The Gazette* and was eventually discussed at Central Council. The debate in the Central Council coincided with the vote on draft of the heavily revised constitution

⁷⁰ ‘The Chairman at Central Council’, p. 415.

which added to speculation about potential changes to responsibilities and ownership. The demutualisation debate in the JLP demonstrated how far the terms of co-ownership could be stretched and how conflicts of opinion over the future of the Partnership between different Partners were prioritised.

On 23 May 1998, *The Daily Telegraph* published an article detailing “windfalls of up to £112,000” that Partners of the JLP would receive, if the group were to be either sold or floated on the stock exchange.⁷¹ The figure was calculated by retail analysts who reported that “senior management [of the JLP] have discussed the idea of a sale, ‘purely hypothetically’”.⁷² It was also reported that because of the complex ownership structure of the JLP, it was possible that an Act of Parliament would be required to permit the sale or flotation, however there was precedent with the case of TSB Bank in 1986 for its flotation.⁷³ News of a potential sale and windfall was queried quickly by the Partnership’s central councillors, with one councillor, Linda Judd, posing the question to Stuart Hampson at his annual Chairman’s Address to the Central Council on 1 June 1998.⁷⁴ Hampson responded that the article was “one of the silliest stories [he] had read for a long time” and that the article’s author had “put together a series of totally meaningless figures to demonstrate his point”.⁷⁵ However, the debate over demutualisation proved increasingly popular in the letters’ pages of *The Gazette* and following fifty pages of letters, resulted in a word count limit being introduced for all letters.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Brett Arends, ‘John Lewis Sale Could Net Staff £112,000’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 23 May 1998, p. 29.

⁷² Arends.

⁷³ Arends.

⁷⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Chairman Answers Councillors’ Questions’, *The Gazette*, 6 June 1998, p. 454.

⁷⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Chairman Answers Councillors’ Questions’, pp. 454–55.

⁷⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Gazette*, 16 March 2018, 34.

Previous histories and organisational studies of the JLP have highlighted the demutualisation debate. Salaman and Storey pointed away from the internal affairs of the Partnership toward the impact of deregulation of the City after which “the mutualist model was depicted as old fashioned and restrictive”.⁷⁷ They argued that as pressure built in building societies to de-mutualize, in turn the structure of the John Lewis Partnership came under scrutiny.⁷⁸ While featuring in business histories of Partnership, the demutualisation debate has been explored as a moment where the structures of ownership and democracy were examined, but as the matter was resolved quickly by council debate and rejection of the proposal, has had little further investigation. However, the debate itself was cited by several interviewees as a significant moment in their careers and highlighted the tensions of ownership and how far the rights of ownership could be extended. These tensions also have the potential to reoccur in the JLP too as the structure will come be debated again twenty-one years following the death of the Queen Elizabeth II as determined by the legal agreement set out by Spedan Lewis.⁷⁹

In the early 1990s, demutualisation had become a popular topic in the United Kingdom (UK) following financial deregulation policies of the Thatcher government in 1986. Deregulation policy, as with the proposal to change Sunday trading laws, had been part of a wider Conservative party aim to reinvigorate the economy following years of perceived decline. The 1979 Conservative Party Manifesto stated that “to become more prosperous, Britain must become more productive, and the British people must be given more incentive”; one method of increasing incentive was increased competition which

⁷⁷ Salaman and Storey, pp. 50–51.

⁷⁸ Salaman and Storey, pp. 50–51.

⁷⁹ Cox, p. 230.

was supported through policies that tackled monopolies, profits and limiting government subsidies.⁸⁰ During Thatcher's first administration (1979-1983), controlling inflation was identified as a key objective in rebuilding the UK economy. Following the 'Winter of Discontent', the Conservative party capitalised on "the public's anti-union mood" in their election manifesto and pledged to "rebuild the economy and offer fresh hope" to the public.⁸¹ The government's overall plan through monetarist policy was to increase tax and reduce public spending in an effort to tackle inflation. Geoffrey Howe, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, reduced the top rate of income tax to "give wealth creators what was deemed the necessary incentive to chase markets" with the aim to encourage economic growth.⁸² Inflation did reduce during Thatcher's first administration, although critics argued that this was in part accidental due to worldwide trends and was achieved at the cost of high unemployment levels in the United Kingdom.⁸³ Rising unemployment had worked to combat the power of collective bargaining however which tempered the public's anti-union mood that had helped to get the Conservative Party elected.

With inflation under control, Thatcher's second administration focused on privatisation - economically, politically, and morally. Thatcher encouraged wider share ownership amongst the public, arguing that "it was the job of businessmen to run businesses" rather than the state.⁸⁴ Wider share ownership would put businessmen in charge but encourage popular capitalism that Thatcher saw as "symbols for freedom"

⁸⁰ *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos, 1900-1997*, ed. by Iain Dale (Routledge, 2000), p. 270.

⁸¹ Eric J Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (Routledge, 2018), p. 18.

⁸² Evans, pp. 21–22.

⁸³ Jim Tomlinson, 'Thatcher, Monetarism and the Politics of Inflation', in *Making Thatcher's Britain*, ed. by Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders, Online (Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 62–77 (pp. 75–76).

⁸⁴ Evans, p. 36.

which would then “exceed trade unions (bad symbols of restrictive practice) in number”.⁸⁵ Additionally, the 1986 financial deregulation policies, referred to commonly as the ‘Big Bang’, removed “restrictive practices” from the London Stock Exchange and “triggered a surge” of activity in UK financial markets.⁸⁶ This was built upon in the 1987 election manifesto where the Conservatives outlined their aim of a “capital-owning democracy of people and families who exercise power as tenants, home-owners, parents, employees, and trade unionists rather than having decisions taken for them” through schemes that introduced the right to buy council houses, made it easier to buy shares in British industry and spread the ownership of nationalised industries through privatisation.⁸⁷

The 1986 Building Societies Act was the next step in the Conservative plan to build a capital-owning democracy through the promotion of homeownership.⁸⁸ Deregulation policy aimed to make mortgages more competitive and more widely accessible. Ultimately, these changes led to the entry of banks into the mortgage market and resulted in the fracturing of building societies between those that retained their status as mutuals and those that converted into banks.⁸⁹

The Act did widen choice and worked to extend homeownership more widely however, through this extension, risk was also increased through more liberal lending for financial institutions and government.⁹⁰ Prior to the 1986 Building Societies Act, building societies offered “over 90 per cent of British mortgages” throughout 1960 and the 1970s

⁸⁵ Evans, p. 36.

⁸⁶ Alexander Engel, ‘The Bang after the Boom: Understanding Financialization’, *Studies in Contemporary History*, 12.3 (2015), pp. 500–510 (p. 502).

⁸⁷ Dale, p. 316.

⁸⁸ Mark Stephens, ‘Mortgage Market Deregulation and Its Consequences’, *Housing Studies*, 22.2 (2007), pp. 201–20 (p. 201).

⁸⁹ Stephens, p. 208.

⁹⁰ Stephens, p. 212.

and rates across the societies were the same as they did not compete with each other.⁹¹ Following the changes “any financial institution could enter the mortgage market” which aimed to improve customer service across the sector through competition.⁹² To demutualise, members of building societies voted to change their mutual status and float on the stock market to become a bank. This action financially rewarded members through the sales of shares.

Abbey National was the first building society to demutualise in 1989 and then nine others followed between 1994 and 2000 which gave over twelve million members a share of over twenty-billion pounds.⁹³ The largest building society to do so was Halifax which had over seven million members whose accounts were turned into shares; “customers with a minimum balance of £100 were given an equivalent of 200 shares, which on the first day of stock exchange trading were worth £1469”.⁹⁴ The high return for members caused sensation in the media which encouraged some individuals to open building society accounts with the hope that members would vote for sale and convert savings into shares.

The move toward demutualisation was set against a backdrop of financial difficulty. In the early 1990s, the UK had entered a period of recession that had been exacerbated by the first Gulf War, causing unemployment, and reduced public spending. Demutualisation of building societies provided a lucrative return on saving accounts, encouraging some to vote in favour to earn a profit. In the JLP, discontent had been

⁹¹ Kieran Heinemann, *Playing the Market: Retail Investment and Speculation in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 211.

⁹² Heinemann, p. 212.

⁹³ Heinemann, p. 212.

⁹⁴ Heinemann, p. 214.

building since the late 1980s.⁹⁵ At the Chairman’s annual address to the Central Council in 1989, one councillor asked Peter Lewis for comment on the “despondency and the sadness that is sometimes felt in the rank and file and among section managers because of cruel administration – perhaps not cruel, but a lack of caring”.⁹⁶ While not fully dismissing the claim of the councillor, Peter Lewis suggested that if this was a concern shared then it needed to be formally expressed through the Committees for Communication or Central Council in the form of a proposal for debate.⁹⁷ However, the sentiment was echoed in the Readers’ letters section with one letter pointing to building unrest caused by the quick promotion of service personnel into senior management and a lack of care toward non-management Partners.⁹⁸ Cox argued that it was the build-up of discontent alongside the monetary advantage boasts by the press that contributed to the vocal support of demutualisation in 1999.⁹⁹

The JLP had encountered demutualisation indirectly previously when Australian Mutual Provident, the parent company of London Life and Friends Provident, whom the Partnership maintained voluntary contribution pension policies with, demutualised in 1997.¹⁰⁰ The JLP would also report later in 1998 that their sales had benefitted from “demutualisation windfalls” of others in departments such as furnishing.¹⁰¹ However, it was the influence of articles published by the national press that put JLP at the centre of

⁹⁵ Cox, pp. 232–33.

⁹⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Chairman Answers Councillors’ Questions’, *The Gazette*, 27 May 1989, p. 400.

⁹⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Chairman Answers Councillors’ Questions’, p. 400.

⁹⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Uriah’, *The Gazette*, 19 August 1989, section Readers’ letters, p. 694.

⁹⁹ Cox, pp. 232–33.

¹⁰⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Gazette*, 1 February 1997, section Readers’ letters, p. 17.

¹⁰¹ Brian O’Callaghan in The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Reports to the Chairman’, *The Gazette*, 3 October 1998, p. 889.

the debate. Partners in favour of demutualisation saw the similarity in structures of the mutuals and the JLP and wanted to democratically decide the future status of the business. Senior management highlighted that the Partnership was “not ours to sell” because it belonged to all Partners, even those who would be employed in the future, however responses countered, with Partners claiming their rights as co-owners.¹⁰²

As the debate grew in the Readers’ Letters section, senior management became concerned over whether there was a majority view in the Partnership that they should attempt to sell the JLP for profit. As described previously, it could be difficult for senior management to know whether Readers’ letters were demonstrative of wider issues within the Partnership or if it was a minority of passionate letter writers.¹⁰³ The Chief Registrar, tasked with the replying to the letters over demutualisation, described that the Partnership was stuck in a cycle between the internal press and the national press:

“One of the unfortunate aspects of timing was *The Gazette* being published, and it was available to the public then on a Friday. There was time for journalists to pick up the Friday Gazette letters and then write little stories about them, about you know how there was huge disquiet in the John Lewis Partnership over its refusal to privatise and so on, and so forth. So they would be in the Sunday papers which Partners would then see and would have time to write into *The Gazette* again so you had this sort-of cycle of Friday *Gazette* carrying the incoming *Gazette* letters and what were then mostly my replies and then picked up by the Sunday papers so another raft of letters coming in so it was, it went on for should think about six weeks maybe.”¹⁰⁴

As the internal and national press fuelled the demutualisation debate, Partners expressed their views for and against demutualisation. The Chief Registrar estimated that the letters were divided equally on the matter, with some Partners staunchly defending

¹⁰² Cox, p. 230.

¹⁰³ D Young.

¹⁰⁴ K Temple.

the ideology of the Partnership over a one-off monetary reward.¹⁰⁵ The debate continued until the topic was raised at Central Council in September 1999.¹⁰⁶ An interviewee, a retired member of senior management, described the feeling amongst the leadership:

“I can tell you that we were extraordinarily anxious about it [...] ordinarily if I remember rightly under the sort-of standing rules or whatever, this particular debate shouldn’t have gone for all that long, half an hour or something tops but in fact the president let it run. Let everybody who wanted to say anything say something so it went on for about an hour and a half or whatever [...] In the event, I can’t remember now but there was only a handful, well actually I mean the whole thing died at that point and I remember it’s the only time I’ve come out of a John Lewis council meeting and been met by the press who wanted to know and I said ‘you have a dead parrot gentlemen’.”¹⁰⁷

Central councillors had decided against pursuing a Partnership-wide referendum due to “overwhelming support for the continuation of the Partnership’s unique democratic structure”.¹⁰⁸ This was decided through a call for councillors to informally express their views and ended with a show of hands, rather than a formal vote, as there was some anxiety over what the outcome might have been.¹⁰⁹ While councillors supported the overall continuation of the business structure, there were calls to re-examine the democracy. The report on the Central Council published in *The Gazette* summarised the general feeling of the debate as “The Partnership was a cut above the rest, its structure was to be cherished, *but*...And there were quite a few buts”.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ K Temple.

¹⁰⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Central Council Gives Overwhelming Support to Continuation of Partnership’s “Unique Democratic Structure”’, *The Gazette*, 25 September 1999, p. 919.

¹⁰⁷ D Young.

¹⁰⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Central Council Gives Overwhelming Support to Continuation of Partnership’s “Unique Democratic Structure”’, p. 919.

¹⁰⁹ K Temple.

¹¹⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Central Council Pulls No Punches’, *The Gazette*, 25 September 1999, p. 930.

The debate on demutualisation emphasised a key factor about co-ownership in the JLP and challenged the business' use of the term, as described by one interviewee reflecting on his experience of co-ownership and in the Partnership:

“Right, the truth about co-ownership is you're not a co-owner. If you were a co-owner, you would have shares and you'd be able to sell them. Right, if you were a co-owner, you would own something, right? So that when you left, you would still own it. You are only a co-owner, whilst you are still employed by the company. Whilst you're still a Partner. So if I was co-owner, having retired I'd still own something. So I'm called a retired Partner, and I still have that title because I have pension, right so being called a co-owner, it's a very strange thing.”¹¹¹

The debate tested the Partnership definition of co-ownership, determining how far management would allow discussions of selling the business to go and challenging ideas about who the business belonged, the past, current or future Partners.

The demutualisation debate was a catalyst for a number of changes in the JLP. Prior to the debate, feedback from Partners had been collected qualitatively through the councils and letters to national *Gazette* or local *Chronicles*. As management struggled to determine the seriousness of a problem through these means, they introduced a quantitative method of evaluation, the Partnership Survey, which aimed to give greater insight into the feeling of Partners. The demutualisation debate also demonstrated the limitations of co-ownership and forced Partners at all levels to consider who the Partnership was really for – the current or future Partners. It also highlighted some of the vulnerability of senior management, who were reluctant to put the matter to a business-wide referendum, and instead settled for a 'show of hands' at the Central Council meeting.

¹¹¹ Interview closed to public (3), *Interview Conducted for 'From an "Experiment in Industrial Democracy" to "Driving the Difference": The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014'*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13.

Being a co-owner in the JLP did offer Partners monetary benefits but overall, they had limited control over decision-making in the business.

6.5 Modernisation and the impact on membership

The JLP has been criticised for its lack of modernisation and was accused of stagnating in both the retail business and the democracy. In 1999, *The Independent* declared that “There is little doubt that John Lewis must adapt” with regard to the Partnership’s unwillingness to accept credit cards and the closure of department stores on Sundays and Mondays.¹¹² In these areas, the JLP lagged behind its competitors which caused concern with sustainability of the business amongst senior management.¹¹³ With regard to the democratic structure, a representative of the Industrial Partnership Association commented that “I think they got to where they got to 50 years ago and not moved one inch since then”.¹¹⁴ These criticisms spanned from the mid-1970s and managers reported that the business had felt under-invested throughout the 1990s.¹¹⁵ This led to a series of changes in the late 1990s to early 2000s that aimed to galvanise the business and utilised the history and constitution of the Partnership to legitimise plans moving forward.

The project to modernise the constitution was instigated by the then chairman, Stuart Hampson, in 1997 to review the constitution prior to the millennium.¹¹⁶ The aim

¹¹² The Independent, ‘Disastrous to Demutualise John Lewis’, 7 August 1999, p. 19.

¹¹³ Salaman and Storey, p. 72.

¹¹⁴ Steering Committee Industrial Partnership Association Conference, ‘Notes for Working Party Report’ (Tavistock Human Relations, 1975), p. 9, Wellcome Collection, SA/TIH/B/2/56/4/6.

¹¹⁵ Salaman and Storey, p. 73.

¹¹⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Consulting Partners on a New Constitution’, *The Gazette*, 24 April 1999, p. 271.

was to make “the constitution readable and understandable” while retaining “the spirit and principle of the founder”.¹¹⁷ The Chief Registrar who was in charge of the project described the old constitution in an interview as “lengthy”, “turgid” and “unnecessarily fussy”.¹¹⁸ An ad hoc committee of eleven Partners was formed to examine and discuss the wording before a draft version was published as a supplement to *The Gazette* on 24 April 1999. The draft was annotated with details of how the wording had changed to highlight the suggested amendments to Partners.¹¹⁹ He described the process of working on the project and the influence of feedback from Partners following the publication of the draft:

“And lots of people wrote in and the working groups with whom I was working took account of, of all those suggestions – we didn’t change everything but we made a lot of changes as a result of what Partners had suggested and thank goodness we did, because the constitution shouldn’t be something that was done to Partners, it should’ve been a document that the Partners’ felt like they could own and I like to believe that they did in that exercise”¹²⁰

This was part of a sequence of changes to how the Partnership determined its relationship between Partners and each other. Described as ‘Partnership Principles’, the modernised articles of the constitution set out, not only how Partners should behave, but how they should be treated which were used as a guide to shape all interactions within the business. In a 2005 campaign, ‘Powered by Our Principles’, these were shaped into six key words: honesty, respect, recognition, enterprise, working together and achievement.¹²¹ Following feedback from the Partnership survey, these aimed to tie

¹¹⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Consulting Partners on a New Constitution’, p. 271.

¹¹⁸ K Temple.

¹¹⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership: Preamble, Principles and Rules: Draft (Supplement)’, *The Gazette*, 24 April 1999.

¹²⁰ K Temple.

¹²¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Powered by Our Principles’, *The Gazette*, 19 March 2005, p. 2.

together “an approach to business relationships targeting lasting commercial success as well as a uniquely satisfying work environment”.¹²²

As well as amending and updating the constitution, other aspects of the Partnership were also reviewed. Reporting in *The Gazette* became more streamlined, for example, the ‘Reports to Chairman’ section which had published reports from senior management and directors giving updates on their area of the business was condensed into an editorial piece to save management time and to make the reports more readable.¹²³ Similarly, the summaries of the Central Council debates were condensed. Previously, full summaries of the debates had been provided to all Partners via *The Gazette* so that Partners could hold management and their councillors accountable.¹²⁴ However, some Partners opposed the printing of full summaries, arguing that “the summary of them [Central Council debates] did not make for very interesting reading, any more than Hansard did” and that briefer edited reports were more likely to encourage readership.¹²⁵ Full summaries of debates were still made available to Branch Councils and more widely via the Partnership intranet, JLPnet, however some Partners accused the Council of limiting access and transparency of the democratic process.¹²⁶

In 2003, the Central Council was replaced by the Partnership Council and divisional councils of John Lewis and Waitrose were introduced.¹²⁷ The brief of the new Partnership

¹²² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Powered by Our Principles’, p. 2.

¹²³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Chairman Answers Councillors’ Questions’, *The Gazette*, 26 May 2001, pp. 473–74.

¹²⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 26 March, Part 2’, *The Gazette*, 14 April 2001, p. 307.

¹²⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Proceedings on 26 March, Part 2’, p. 309.

¹²⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Bye and Response’, *The Gazette*, 14 July 2001, section Readers’ letters, p. 674.

¹²⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘What Does the Partnership Council Mean to You?’, *The Gazette*, 4 January 2003, p. 1177.

Council was more focused than that of the previous Central Council and aimed “to leave issues that affect the daily running of the two divisions to their respective councils” to focus on the “strategic direction and character of the Partnership as a whole”.¹²⁸ The new council had sixty-nine elected seats across sixty-eight constituencies, with John Lewis Oxford Street as the only constituency with two representatives.¹²⁹ Meetings were scheduled four times a year and six regular committees were announced of similar nature to those of the previous Central Council: steering, finance, charities, leisure activities, pay and benefits, and the central committee for claims.¹³⁰ The term of councillors were also extended to two years when the democratic system was reformed, however councillors who wanted to continue into additional terms would still need to appeal to the electorate to ensure re-election.¹³¹

Following the demutualisation debate in the JLP, the Partnership had introduced a survey to capture quantitative data alongside the qualitative data gained through the Readers’ letters, committees and councils to gauge Partnership-wide opinion. The Partner Opinion Survey was trialled in 2003 but officially launched in 2004.¹³² Questions included in the survey aimed to cover different aspects of the JLP at work and included three sections: “My job”, “The local picture” and “The bigger picture”.¹³³ The surveys took place on a “rolling basis covering nine months of the year” which meant that “on average, three

¹²⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘What Does the Partnership Council Mean to You?’, p. 1177.

¹²⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Representation on the New Partnership Council 2003’, *The Gazette*, 14 December 2002, p. 1139.

¹³⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘What Does the Partnership Council Mean to You?’, p. 1177.

¹³¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘John Lewis Council’, 2004, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 4504.

¹³² Salaman and Storey, p. 181.

¹³³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Measuring Our Success’, *The Gazette*, 11 September 2004, p. 7.

John Lewis branches and around 16 Waitrose branches do the Survey each month”.¹³⁴ The survey was to be completed by all Partners and used as a “critical barometer by management, a way of testing partners’ responses to the search for great efficiencies and to a range of organizational and commercial developments”.¹³⁵

Response rates differed greatly across the business. Over the first year of the Partnership Opinion Survey, the overall rate of response was sixty-nine per cent, however the JLP reported that “the lowest was 23 per cent and the highest 99 per cent (scored by Waitrose Sudbury)”.¹³⁶ While these response rates differed greatly, there was the suggestion from Partners that due to the anonymity of the survey process, results that were being captured were from individuals who were less likely to contribute in meetings: “A lot of people don’t like speaking up in meetings, so the Survey gives them a chance to say what they think without being identified”.¹³⁷ As the Partnership Opinion Survey only launched across the Partnership in 2004, there are limited results available for the period 1964-2014. However, the results of the surveys demonstrated the feeling towards the culture of the JLP at an individual, local and national level throughout a period where inquiries and changes were being made to the Partnership’s democratic and management structures through schemes such as the ‘Democracy Project’ and ‘Driving the Difference’.

The Partnership Opinion Surveys were not without criticism. While the responses were analysed by an external company, the questions were composed internally, and

¹³⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Measuring Our Success’, p. 8.

¹³⁵ Salaman and Storey, p. 80.

¹³⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Measuring Our Success’, p. 7.

¹³⁷ Pauline Marshall (Herbert Parkinson) in The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Measuring Our Success’, p. 10.

these were re-drafted in each edition of the survey.¹³⁸ Cathcart recorded how Partners perceived changes made to the questions between 2005 and 2006, through this observed exchange at a communications half-hour in a northern branch of the Partnership:

“Forum Representative: They’ve asked me to get your ideas on how to improve the Partner Opinion Survey Results.

Partner: That’s easy; it’s just a matter of editing the questions until they get the answer that suits them.

[Laughter]”¹³⁹

While some Partners remained sceptical about the JLP’s use of the surveys, responses did lead to change in the Partnership. The first results of the Partner Opinion Survey had shown that many partners did not agree with the statement that “Our democratic bodies are effective”.¹⁴⁰ This led chairman, Stuart Hampson, to instigate the ‘2004 Democracy Project’ and senior management have continued to attempt to refine the Partnership model based on survey response.¹⁴¹ While some modernisation plans, such as the redraft of the constitution, worked to widen accessibility to the Partnership’s democracy, others also had a deep impact on how the structures operated.

In 2007, the Branch Councils and Committees for Communication were replaced with Branch Forums in John Lewis department stores. The Committees for Communication had been one of the safeguards designed by Spedan Lewis to promote a healthy democracy, although they had been accused of duplicating the work of the Branch Council, which contributed towards their amalgamation.¹⁴² Previously the

¹³⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Measuring Our Success’, p. 7.

¹³⁹ Cathcart, ‘Directing Democracy: Competing Interests and Contested Terrain in the John Lewis Partnership’, p. 613.

¹⁴⁰ Salaman and Storey, p. 160.

¹⁴¹ Salaman and Storey, pp. 160–62.

¹⁴² Salaman and Storey, pp. 160–61; The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Committees for Communication’, *The Gazette*, 4 January 1964, pp. 1202–3.

Committees for Communication had been argued to “be very worthwhile” and the element of anonymity was considered vital to work of the committee as it “encourage[d] everyone to speak and to say what they feel without worrying about it being held against them”.¹⁴³ However, the Partners’ Counsellor, Nigel Brotherton, now argued that the Committees for Communication were outdated. He stated that “C4Cs were structured so Partners could talk anonymously, but society and the Partnership have changed and Partners now have a far less formal relationship with management and don’t feel so constrained at voicing their opinions”.¹⁴⁴ He continued to say that the forums would encourage further discussion but still allow for the raising of issues anonymously when necessary. The Branch Forums aimed to be more inclusive and encourage two-way communication between non-management Partners and management.¹⁴⁵ However, Partners in favour of the Committees for Communication argued that the fact “there [was] no management on the committee and the representatives [were] all from the front line of the business” was what had made them effective.¹⁴⁶

The new Branch Forums were scheduled for a minimum of four meetings per year and any member could be the chair of the meeting, as determined by the other members.¹⁴⁷ Partners were selected, rather than elected, by their colleagues to represent their views at the forum, although Partners were still allowed to canvass if they had a particular interest in becoming a representative.¹⁴⁸ It was argued that the new system

¹⁴³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Ensuring the Voice of the “ordinary” Partner Is Heard’, p. 168.

¹⁴⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Out with the Old, in with the New, as Voting Starts for Local Forums’, *The Gazette*, 28 September 2007, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Cox, p. 288.

¹⁴⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Anon’, *The Gazette*, 23 March 2007, section Letters, p. 24.

¹⁴⁷ Salaman and Storey, p. 158.

¹⁴⁸ Salaman and Storey, p. 158.

allowed “Partners a chance to get more involved” and would encourage a “spread of representation” as all Partners would be “represented by someone from their own section”.¹⁴⁹ Selected Partners were supported in their role by a ‘Democracy Coach’ who were also required to attend at least two meetings per year.¹⁵⁰ In Waitrose a form of local democracy called ‘Partner Voice’ was introduced, which played a similar role to that of the John Lewis Branch forum.¹⁵¹ The Branch Forums were succeeded by ‘Partner Voice’ across the business in 2012.¹⁵²

While the Committees for Communication had previously held a purely consultative role in the Partnership’s democracy, the Branch Council had been a decision-making body. The move to Branch Forums raised concern over the sharing of power in the business, as one Partner argued that “The new forums have no decision-making powers and are, at best, advisory bodies”.¹⁵³ The shift was echoed in changes made to the Partnership Council in 2009 following a commission that examined ‘Democratic Character’ which recommended that:

“[...] the Council should only make decisions of governance matters. On commercial and operational matters, it should make *recommendations* to management and then *hold management to account* for the decisions it makes”.¹⁵⁴

The commission had comprised of thirteen Partners who were to examine how the Partnership Council could “be developed to embrace a growing Partnership and prepare

¹⁴⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Out with the Old, in with the New, as Voting Starts for Local Forums’, p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ Salaman and Storey, p. 158.

¹⁵¹ Cox, p. 288.

¹⁵² Salaman and Storey, p. 161.

¹⁵³ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Hans Peters’, *The Gazette*, 23 March 2007, section Letters, p. 25.

¹⁵⁴ Salaman and Storey, pp. 162–63. (Emphasis from text)

it for the future”.¹⁵⁵ Following the publication of the recommendations of the commission in *The Gazette* a series of letters were published offering comment and criticism which included a eulogy to the “Partnership Democracy” which declared:

“In later life, he [the Partnership Democracy] became seriously ill when he came in contact with management spin, the Democracy Project and Partner apathy. Although there were many well-intentioned attempts to cure these grave conditions, he lost the will to live when he was given large doses of Commission on Democratic Character and slipped away quietly.”¹⁵⁶

The then chairman, Charlie Mayfield, countered the claims stating, “It is early days with the Survey this year but we have seen improving scores relating to the democracy”, suggesting that these reforms were positively impacting Partners’ impressions of the democracy.¹⁵⁷ However, as reforms pushed the Partnership into more of an influencing role than before, changes were perceived as being unpopular with the serving councillors. Following the reforms, “an unprecedented seventy-five percent of councillors” in the 2009 election were Partners that had not previously served as councillors on the Partnership Council.¹⁵⁸

Further reforms under consideration in 2013 titled ‘Driving the Difference’ worked to engage the then Partnership Council at a high level with Chairman Charlie Mayfield declaring to councillors “You’ve all had a copy of the Partnership Business Plan – you’ve got pretty much what the Partnership Board had in November. We’re sharing much more knowledge with the Council and that’s vital to your ability to hold us to account”.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘A Blueprint for Our New Democracy’, *The Gazette*, 29 May 2009, p. 12.

¹⁵⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Anon’, *The Gazette*, 12 June 2009, section Gazette letters, p. 13.

¹⁵⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Response by Charlie Mayfield’, *The Gazette*, 12 June 2009, section Gazette letters, p. 13.

¹⁵⁸ Salaman and Storey, p. 168.

¹⁵⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Report on the Partnership Council’, *The Gazette*, 1 February 2013, p. 11.

However, the apparent transparency did not reassure all Partners as readers' letters became concerned with dilution of the democracy and one commented:

“Every question is met with ‘this is the norm in the industry outside’. May I remind whomever that this is the John Lewis Partnership – a different kind of company; a co-owned company; we ain't the ‘industry outside’”.¹⁶⁰

Another noted the volume of letters on the topic of ‘Driving the Difference’ and pointed to a lack of overall Partner involvement.¹⁶¹ This era of the rejuvenation of the Partnership’s democracy continued to prompt questions of whether the JLP had lost its ‘difference’ to other retailers. By 2014, the reformed status of the Partnership Council was clearly emphasised to be around ‘influence’ rather than ‘deciding’, and management moved towards consulting with Partners, but ultimately empowering the senior management to make decisions.¹⁶² A change was noted in how the Partnership Council held the Chairman of the Partnership to account in twice annual sessions where the Chairman would report. The wording changed from “accept the Chairman’s report” to “Supports the Chairman in his leadership of the Partnership”.¹⁶³ This rephrase was styled to be similar to that of an Annual General Meeting’s vote of confidence, however, arguably the power dynamic differed significantly emphasising the leadership role of the Chairman over the power of the Council to hold him accountable.

As well as undergoing changes to the democratic structure, the business model of the JLP has also been adapted. In 2009 the Partnership joined with Welcome Break to

¹⁶⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Anon’, *The Gazette*, 1 February 2013, section Gazette letters, p. 19.

¹⁶¹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Letter by Anon’, *The Gazette*, 25 January 2013, section Gazette letters, p. 14.

¹⁶² Salaman and Storey, pp. 166–67.

¹⁶³ Salaman and Storey, p. 167.

open smaller branches of Waitrose in service stations and then on garage forecourts.¹⁶⁴ Branches such as these posed a challenge to the question of membership as not all those involved in the running of the branch were recognised as Partners. The first two Welcome Break sites created fifty jobs but “while the non-management team will be Partners, they will be overseen by non-Partner Welcome Break managers who have experience in operating in this environment”.¹⁶⁵ Salaman and Storey argued that the motivation for Welcome Break to include Waitrose branches in their service stations was because of the reputation of the JLP and the hope that it would create a “halo effect” for Welcome Break and increase the value of the business.¹⁶⁶ However, Welcome Break employees were cheaper to employ so the organisation would not agree to all staff becoming Partners because of the cost. Consequently, a manager interviewed by Salaman and Storey queried the role of the franchise model in the business and whether it would be more cost effective to move the whole business towards franchising; the franchises cost less than the traditional Waitrose model so there were benefits in considering a move towards franchising.¹⁶⁷

However, changes to the JLP model, including outsourcing, needed to consider the impact on reputation to both Partners and customers. In 2013, the Living Wage Foundation targeted John Lewis Oxford Street over pay for cleaning staff reporting that “while staff at the store enjoyed a 17% bonus the cleaners were there to clean up the

¹⁶⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Welcome Break Welcomes Waitrose’, *The Gazette*, 3 April 2009, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Welcome Break Welcomes Waitrose’, p. 3.

¹⁶⁶ Salaman and Storey, p. 117.

¹⁶⁷ Salaman and Storey, p. 117.

party”.¹⁶⁸ As outsourced members of staff, the cleaners were not granted the status of Partners or eligible for Partnership bonus. In response to a readers’ letter querying the role of outsourcing in the JLP, the Director of Personnel, Tracey Killen, argued that:

“[...] we have a clear policy on membership that is set out for all Partners to see on the intranet. The policy aims to protect our co-ownership model by creating a starting point of presumption of membership and allowing for judgement to be applied where membership is not in our best interests.”¹⁶⁹

The policy for outsourcing considered whether the JLP had the “expertise or capabilities in house” and whether “the activity is more efficiently delivered by a third party”.¹⁷⁰ The employment of cleaners fell under the latter category as it was argued external companies offered more flexibility and efficiency.

These examples of where membership of the Partnership differed for individuals and across branches highlight some of the complexities and tensions of being an individual employed by the Partnership and experiencing membership. This experience only became more complex in situations where the Partnership faced financial hardship. Closures and cuts to areas of the business have resulted in redundancies for some Partners, leading to the termination of their membership with the JLP. The action of redundancy called into question the Partnership’s ultimate aim, “the happiness in every way of all its members”, where individuals were confronted with limited options to continue membership.¹⁷¹ Decisions made during periods of economic downturn were justified as preserving the business as a whole but resulted in the loss of livelihood for individuals.

¹⁶⁸ Living Wage Foundation, ‘John Lewis Cleaners Miss Out on Bonus and Living Wage’, *Living Wage Foundation*, 7 March 2013 <<https://www.livingwage.org.uk/news/john-lewis-cleaners-miss-out-bonus-and-living-wage>> [accessed 12 June 2022].

¹⁶⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Response by Tracey Killen to “Outsourcing” by Anon’, *The Gazette*, 2 July 2014, section Gazette letters, p. 18.

¹⁷⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Response by Tracey Killen to “Outsourcing” by Anon’, p. 18.

¹⁷¹ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 14.

Decisions were also justified by the management's perception that a lack of growth meant decline and therefore growth was paramount to measuring business success and Partners' happiness; even if that led to some redundancies in areas of business that were deemed to be holding the business back.¹⁷² This strategy sacrificed other potential measures for overall Partner happiness, such as retention and experience, for growth.

Precedent was set within the Partnership for redundancy procedures with the sale of Holdron's in 1948. The small department store in Peckham, London, had been part of the acquisition of Selfridge Provincial Stores in 1940.¹⁷³ Spedan Lewis, founder and then Chairman, responded to rumours that a branch would be sold in *The Gazette*, stating that "The Partnership has received an offer a Branch that we should not have chosen to acquire separately and that, as yet, we are not very well equipped to use to good advantage".¹⁷⁴ The official announcement of which branch would be sold was delayed until the sale confirmed. Once confirmed, notice was distributed to the Holdron's Partners on the 4th January, before appearing in *The Gazette* on 8th January 1949.¹⁷⁵ In the notice, the Partnership declared its intention to offer as many Partners as possible a transfer to another branch and where it was not possible to retain some Partners, keep their names on a re-admission list so that they could be considered for future posts, if they chose.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Salaman and Storey, p. 114.

¹⁷³ Jonathan Blatchford, 'Acquisition of Holdrons', *John Lewis Partnership Memory Store*, 2018 <https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/branch_finder/branches_f-h/holdrons_ltd_peckham/acquisition_in_1940> [accessed 13 June 2022].

¹⁷⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Sale of Branch', *The Gazette*, 11 December 1948, p. 501.

¹⁷⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Sale of a Branch', *The Gazette*, 8 January 1949, p. 541.

¹⁷⁶ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Sale of a Branch', p. 541.

Prior to the rumours of a branch being for sale, the Central Board had met to decide the future of Holdron's.¹⁷⁷ They had decided that "the Partnership should be prepared to sell Holdron's if a satisfactory price was available".¹⁷⁸ Once negotiations had been settled, the Partners in-branch were informed followed by the rest of the Partnership. Out of 331 workers in the branch, 164 Partners were transferred or redeployed to other stores within the JLP and twenty-eight were awaiting confirmation of a suitable transfer at the time of publication.¹⁷⁹ In addition, two workers retired and four were "recommended for premature pension".¹⁸⁰ Of the remaining workers, 105 full-time members of staff chose to leave the Partnership, fifteen that they had been unable to transfer and another thirteen who had been deemed unsuitable for transfer or to be considered for re-admission.¹⁸¹ The process was clearly outlined in *The Gazette* and could be commented on either through the Readers' Letters section of the publication or through representatives at Branch or Central Council.

The policy of redeployment over redundancy where possible has been carried forward as shown in the 2010 documentary *Inside John Lewis*, where the business was shown to be dealing with the impact of the 2008 recession and a member of senior management stated: "we want to limit that [redundancies] as much as possible, and we really want to offer long-term opportunities for people and not to say that it's either if this job goes, its redundancy and just to have two options like other businesses do".¹⁸² A

¹⁷⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Business: The Closing of Holdron's', *The Gazette*, 19 February 1949, p. 28.

¹⁷⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Business: The Closing of Holdron's', p. 28.

¹⁷⁹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Business: The Closing of Holdron's', p. 28.

¹⁸⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Business: The Closing of Holdron's', p. 28.

¹⁸¹ The John Lewis Partnership, 'Business: The Closing of Holdron's', p. 28.

¹⁸² *Inside John Lewis*.

policy of natural wastage, where Partners retire or choose to leave the business and no one is hired to replace them, was also pursued where possible as shown in modernisation plans from the early 2000s.¹⁸³ This often paired with another policy shown in *Inside John Lewis* where Partners were then trained across multiple departments to ensure that the business continued to operate smoothly.¹⁸⁴ Alternative options, such as early retirement, were also offered for Partners nearing retirement age with the additional option of using their long-leave, a 6-month paid reward for twenty-five years of service, prior to their retirement.

While decisions surrounding closures were considered by the Central Board of the Partnership and Partners could feedback through representatives and *The Gazette*, the overall influence of popular opinion with regard to closures was limited. Financial risk was a factor in the Partnership that was felt by Spedan to necessitate a safeguard within the democratic system. Decisions about financial risk did impact Partners, through store closures and redundancies as in the case of Holdron's, but the safeguarding of the future of the JLP was prioritised over individuals or groups of Partners.¹⁸⁵ It was argued that the democratic structure should *influence*, rather than make business decisions to ensure management efficiency.¹⁸⁶ While limited in influence over what was argued to be protecting the business financially, the public opinion of the Partnership did enter into decision-making considerations for some members of management. One retired member of senior management stated that "being a manager in John Lewis is like life in a goldfish

¹⁸³ Salaman and Storey, pp. 81–82.

¹⁸⁴ *Inside John Lewis*.

¹⁸⁵ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, pp. 182–83.

¹⁸⁶ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 182.

bowl” because of the transparency caused by the journalism and democratic structures.¹⁸⁷

6.6 Conclusion

The responsibilities seemingly tied to the title of ‘Partner’ had to be balanced carefully between commercial pressures and the democracy. The balance was led from the top with Chairman playing an important role establishing the Partnership’s key priorities, however these filtered down through heads of branches, department managers and non-management partners, each with their own understanding of the Partnership. This was a concern raised at the 1972 Conference of Branch Council Presidents and Clerks at Odney; “Present Chairman was the last link with the Founder; the responsibility of Councils for preserving the essential nature of the Partnership would be even more important after his retirement”.¹⁸⁸ While efforts had been made to ensure key features of structure remained true to Spedan Lewis’s design and Partnership ideology, senior management made the argument that the founder could not foresee the future of the business and changes were necessary to ensure its longevity.¹⁸⁹

The role of safeguards within the business remained a consistent element of the Partnership. The safeguards worked to both limit and empower management. As evidenced, Partners could debate management decisions, but they were required to argue their case as a benefit for the business to succeed. However, this depended on the

¹⁸⁷ D Young.

¹⁸⁸ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Summary of Points Made at the 1972 Conference of Branch Council Presidents and Clerks at Odney’, 1971, p. 6, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 2060 xviii.

¹⁸⁹ Salaman and Storey.

engagement of Partners and frequently councillors were members of management themselves. The ability for Partners to directly challenge and launch and their Partnership policy also became increasingly difficult under reforms to the democracy which formally changed the role of the Central Council to a consultative body over a decision-making body. These shifts demonstrated that a Partner's ability to exercise their right as citizen in a democracy became more diluted over time. The Committees for Communication and Branch councils amalgamated, narrowing down the overall number of representatives in branch and the function of the Central Council shifted. These decisions were led by responses to Partnership Surveys, however as shown, engagement in the democratic structures was a perennial problem for the business.

While there were ways for Partners to actively participate within the democratic structures of the business and to hold management to account for their decision-making, there were different levels of participation and engagement from partners across the JLP. As described by a retired member of the senior management team:

"I don't want to be too sort of starry-eyed and what Sir Bernard Miller apparently said was that the best you can hope for is that a third of Partners are really engaged and active, then another third are not very active but supportive and the remaining third are indifferent to it – it's just a job or whatever. And I think give or take, that probably still holds good but still makes for a big difference in terms of a real sense of we are all in this together and working for the common good."¹⁹⁰

Some of the issues with engagement presented showed how barriers were felt in the business and that despite having the democratic right to challenge and hold management to account, some Partners doubted whether their voices would be heard. Inconsistencies within the conflicting identities of a 'Partner' did not dispel doubts as

¹⁹⁰ D Young.

Partners were positioned as co-owners in the business to receive the benefits, but also consider their responsibility to the business. These tensions were highlighted in cases where branches closed and Partners lost their membership, despite holding the title of 'co-owner'. Decisions such as these were justified as being in the best interest of business, while the JLP faced a dramatically changing retail landscape. In addition, membership to the Partnership was not as straightforward as outlined in the governing documents of the JLP, and over time membership became increasingly complex as parts of the business were outsourced and more non-Partners came under the umbrella of the Partnership. This created tension between who got to receive the benefits of being a Partner and raised questions about which roles in the business were essential to maintaining the principles of the Partnership.

7 Conclusion

As per the settlement period defined in the first trust settlement in 1929, the death of Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022 has started a timer for the John Lewis Partnership.¹ While currently protected by the trust settlements, in 2043 the structure of the JLP can be debated and the ownership of structure of the business could be changed. This would challenge the Partnership model and the position of Partners as co-owners in the business. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the restructuring of ownership or sale of the business may result in short-term wins for individuals or release capital into the business. However, it will risk the “Partnership difference” that the business has spent almost a century cultivating.

Without the co-ownership model, the premise of Partnership is called into question, as without the status of co-owner, Partners lose their stake in the business and consequently, their ability to effectively hold management to account. As such, the relationship between Partners and the business would shift, as the democratic structures would formally lose their authority, becoming developed bodies of consultation rather than influential decision-making institutions. This would also have a financial impact for Partners through the potential loss or reshaping of the Partnership bonus scheme and provision of welfare and amenities across the business.

Equally, management lose a unique and powerful bargaining tool and risk damaging industrial relations: as co-owners in the business, individual Partners have the

¹ John Spedan Lewis, ‘Appendix I: The First Irrevocable Settlement in Trust April 1929’, p. 205.

responsibility to ensure that the decisions they make benefit the business, rather than just themselves individually or as a singular unit within the JLP. Management also has the ability to push through decisions or strategy by arguing that it is in the best interest of the business. While dissolving the Partnership model would give management authoritarian control over the business, there is the potential for further challenges in terms of industrial relations.

The co-ownership model has been identified as key to JLP's endurance and resilience on the high street, where other department stores have faced closures or administration in periods of economic decline.² The structure, while potentially hindering rapid modernisation and expansion, ensures that the JLP is risk averse, navigating difficult economic periods with more success than competitors. Department stores, in particular, have become vulnerable on the high street. This has been evidenced by the closure of the final Alders department store in 2012, British Home Stores in 2016 and House of Fraser entering administration into 2018.³ All of these stores had a long history of high-street trading but only a few now remain.

This does not mean that the JLP has not experienced the same financial difficulties faced by their competitors. In February 2020, Sir Charlie Mayfield stepped down as chairman of the JLP, replaced by Dame Sharon White who became the sixth chairman of

² Salaman and Storey, p. vii.

³ Alex Lawson, 'Alders to Close after 150 Years in Business', *Retail Week*, 10 September 2012 <<https://www.retail-week.com/department-stores/allders-to-close-after-150-years-in-business/5040470.article>> [accessed 25 March 2024]; BBC News, 'Last BHS Stores Close for Final Time after 88 Years', *BBC News*, 28 August 2016 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-37207481>> [accessed 25 March 2024]; Jonathan Eley, 'House of Fraser Calls in Administrators', *Financial Times*, 10 August 2018 <<https://www.ft.com/content/fd0ab332-9c68-11e8-9702-5946bae86e6d>> [accessed 23 April 2024].

the Partnership.⁴ In March 2020, the United Kingdom went into national lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and “all ‘non-essential’ high street businesses were closed”, leading to a rapid shift in the retail landscape with a focus on ‘essential’ retailers such as supermarkets and pharmacies.⁵ Waitrose saw large increases in sales, with online orders doubling during the first lockdown, however, the John Lewis department stores faced difficulties as they had to remain closed.⁶ The overall impact on the business led to Partners not receiving Partnership Bonus for the first time since 1953.⁷

In July 2020, as lockdown restrictions eased and non-essential retailers were allowed to re-open, the JLP announced that eight John Lewis branches would remain closed permanently which included two department stores in Watford and Birmingham, four John Lewis at Home branches, and two travel hub shops.⁸ The reinstatement of lockdown measures throughout 2020 and 2021 continued to challenge retailers financially and in December 2020, Debenhams announced the closure all 124 branches ending 242 years of trading on the high street.⁹ While Debenhams had faced repeated bouts of financial difficulty, they had repeatedly bounced back, however the impact of the pandemic permanently shut the department store chain. The brand was saved and now

⁴ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘John Lewis Partnership Appoints Sharon White as Chairman’, 6 June 2019 <<https://johnlewispartnership.co.uk/media/press/y2019/john-lewis-partnership-appoints-sharon-white-as-chairman.html>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

⁵ Jennifer Brown and others, ‘Coronavirus: A History of English Lockdown Laws’, *UK Parliament House of Commons Library*, 22 December 2021 <<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9068/>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

⁶ Chloe Rigby, ‘Waitrose Sees Online Grocery Orders Double since the Beginning of 2020’, *Internet Retailing*, 16 June 2020 <<https://internetretailing.net/waitrose-sees-online-grocery-orders-double-since-the-beginning-of-2020-21562/>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

⁷ BBC News, ‘John Lewis Scraps Bonus for First Time since 1953’, *BBC News*, 17 September 2020 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-54187674>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

⁸ Elias Jahshan, ‘1300 Jobs at Risk as John Lewis Shuts down 8 Stores but Reopens Another 9’, *Retail Gazette*, 9 July 2020 <<https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2020/07/job-cuts-john-lewis-shuts-down-8-stores-reopens-9-lockdown/>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

⁹ Daniel Thomas, ‘What Went Wrong at Debenhams?’, *BBC News*, 1 December 2020 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-55144922>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

continues as a solely online presence.¹⁰ The JLP continued to be challenged by the pandemic as well, reporting their first annual loss in 2021 which resulted in the closure of a further eight shops including department stores in Sheffield, Aberdeen, York and Peterborough and John Lewis at Home stores in Tunbridge Wells, Ashford, Chester and Basingstoke.¹¹

Despite the end of lockdown restrictions, the retail sector has continued to face challenges as many shoppers continue to follow pandemic trends of shopping online. In 2022, John Lewis department stores dropped the pledge of “Never Knowingly Undersold”, arguing that it had become “less relevant as shopping moves increasingly online”.¹² The pledge originated in the 1920s but had been frequently criticised for its “wilfully dense wording”.¹³ However, the slogan had become a “cherished sign of trust” for John Lewis department stores and key part of their brand identity featuring on bags, gift cards, receipts and the liveries of vehicles.¹⁴

In further efforts to modernise and diversify the business, the JLP announced that they would be turning vacant buildings owned by the Partnership into residential properties and building around current branches to enter the rental property market.¹⁵

¹⁰ BBC News, ‘End of an Era for Debenhams as Final Shops Set to Close’, *BBC News*, 5 May 2021 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-56993816>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

¹¹ John Lewis Partnership, ‘John Lewis Partnership Plans Not to Reopen Eight John Lewis Shops from Lockdown as It Rebalances Store Estate’, 24 March 2021 <<https://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/media/press/y2021/jlp-plans-not-to-reopen-eight-jl-shops.html>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

¹² BBC News, ‘John Lewis to End “Never Knowingly Undersold” Price Pledge’, *BBC News*, 25 February 2023 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-60522421>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

¹³ Cox, p. 184.

¹⁴ BBC News, ‘John Lewis to End “Never Knowingly Undersold” Price Pledge’; ‘17: John Lewis (1925) - Never Knowingly Undersold’, *Creative Review* <<https://www.creativereview.co.uk/never-knowingly-undersold/>> [accessed 25 April 2024].

¹⁵ The John Lewis Partnership, ‘John Lewis Partnership Announces First Proposed Locations for Rental Homes’, *John Lewis Partnership*, 9 June 2022

Nina Bhatia, strategy director at the JLP, argued that the move would “make the business more resilient and less cyclical”, however, this strategy has been criticised for moving their focus away from the retail side of the business.¹⁶ These changes to the business suggest that the JLP has been struggling with its identity following the difficulties of the Covid-19 pandemic and that modernisation continues to pose a serious challenge for the Partnership.

Following this series of changes, *The Sunday Times* reported in 2023 that the JLP were considering plans to change their ownership structure by selling a minority stake, allowing Partners to maintain their majority, but hoped to raise two billion pounds to invest back into the business to help alleviate financial struggles.¹⁷ The suggested change in structure received condemnation by Partners and significant figures in the retail trade.¹⁸ Mary Portas, retail consultant and broadcaster, penned an open letter to both Sharon White, the Chairman, and Nish Kankiwala, the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of the JLP, to argue that the Partnership model must be preserved.¹⁹ Portas called for the Partnership to recommit to “the principles John Lewis was founded on: common ownership, the improvement of partners’ lives; collective responsibility; and true enduring

<https://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/media/press/y2022/jlp-announces-first-proposed-locations-for-rental-homes.html> [accessed 25 March 2024].

¹⁶ Sarah Butler, ‘John Lewis Defends Plans to Build 10,000 Rental Homes on Its Land’, *The Guardian*, 30 June 2023 <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/jun/30/john-lewis-defends-plans-to-build-10000-rental-homes-on-its-land>> [accessed 25 April 2024].

¹⁷ Emma Simpson and Lucy Hooker, ‘John Lewis Considers Plans to Change Staff-Owned Structure’, *BBC News*, 19 March 2023 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-65006218>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

¹⁸ Daniel Thomas, Jemma Dempsey, and Lucy Hooker, ‘John Lewis Will Always Be Open by Staff, Says Boss’, *BBC News*, 10 May 2023 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-65520696>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

¹⁹ Mary Portas, ‘Open Letter to John Lewis Chairman Sharon White and New Chief Executive Nish Kankiwala’, *LinkedIn* <https://www.linkedin.com/posts/mary-portas-2420108a_john-lewis-an-open-letter-activity-7044941439293607936-pY5V/> [accessed 25 March 2024].

value”, arguing that failure was not an option of the JLP and calling them to remember that “while you fight for the financial brain of your brand, never forget there’s a battle for its heart and soul too”.²⁰

The Partnership model of the JLP remained largely unchanged for the majority of the twentieth century despite changes that have impacted the wider retail sector such as shifting demands from consumers and employees, economic challenges, and legislative changes. The ‘heart and soul’ of the Partnership, as initially set out by John Spedan Lewis, has been preserved through governing documents such as the Constitution and Settlement Agreements, allowing the JLP to function similarly to a small nation. Partners gained their status as citizens within the small nation through employment and then continued to practice citizenship through their everyday engagement with the Partnership. Engagement varied from simply fulfilling their role as an employee to becoming involved in the Partnership democracy and way of life through the leisure and welfare provision.

The democratic institutions of the JLP aimed to engage Partners from the grassroots through Committees for Communication and the Readers’ letters section of *The Gazette* to the senior strategic level through the Central Board. John Spedan Lewis envisioned that these institutions would function similar to the democratic structure of the United Kingdom, with a cabinet, parliament and local borough councils giving Partners the opportunity to be involved at every level of the business. As previously argued by Flanders, Pomeranz and Woodward, members of management were most likely to hold elected positions as they were the most well-known across constituencies.²¹ However,

²⁰ Portas.

²¹ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 60.

branch level councils, committees, and journalism as well as transparency of the democratic process ensured that Partners were able hold management to account within their as co-owner of the business.

As co-owners of the business, John Spedan Lewis wanted Partners to experience the “advantages of ownership”, for example a share of the profits through Partnership Bonus and welfare and leisure schemes.²² The provision of leisure within the Partnership highlighted paternalism within the business as the decision to subsidise leisure was dependent on activities being “desirable for health for the body or mind” of Partners as well as of the highest quality.²³ For example, this meant that for many years the Partnership would fund trips to select theatre productions but not to musicals. For Spedan Lewis, this distinction between activities suitable for subsidy worked towards his vision of a “truly classless society”, demonstrating important discussions on the relationship between class, citizenship, and paternalism in the Partnership.²⁴

The provision of leisure and welfare for employees was not unique in the JLP and had a long history in the running of department stores linked to industrial relations and retainment of staff in a sector with high employee turnover rates.²⁵ However, within the structure of the JLP, the provision of leisure through societies and clubs was often organised at a grass-roots level, allowing Partners some autonomy over spending. While the framework for the provision of leisure and amenities was grounded in paternalistic values, Partners were able to challenge and reshape leisure provision by setting up their

²² The John Lewis Partnership, ‘Appendix IV: The Settlement of April, 1950’, in *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965* (John Lewis and Company Limited, 1965), p. 108.

²³ John Spedan Lewis, *Partnership For All*, p. 273.

²⁴ John Spedan Lewis, *Fairer Shares*, p. 40.

²⁵ Lancaster, p. 126.

own clubs and societies funded by the JLP and through the councils and committees who determined what was or was not suitable for subsidy. The Partnership's long-term commitment to the funding of leisure activities, as set out in the constitution, allows for the examination of broader shifts in leisure as workers moved away from organisational group activities towards individual discounts encouraged by increased neoliberal values in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The shift in governments in the postwar period from apparent consensus to neoliberal policy was demonstrated keenly through the increasingly hostile approach of governments towards trade unionism. The JLP positioned itself in debates as an alternative and better model for managing industrial relations and worker participation in a period of increased industrial tensions. As political interest shifted away from conciliatory industrial relations with trade unions and focused on how employees could become more involved and invested in businesses, the JLP was positioned ahead of competitors. Though the political move toward worker participation was never fully realised, the JLP has remained of interest to key political figures such as the deputy prime minister of the coalition government of 2010, Nick Clegg, when proposing alternative models of industrial relations.²⁶

Whilst the majority of the Partnership was not unionised, there were some areas of the business, including transport and manufacturing, that had a high density of union membership. The Constitution of the JLP emphasised that membership to trade unions was permitted within the Partnership, however industrial action in the 1970s highlighted

²⁶ Wintour.

tensions between conflicting membership and loyalty.²⁷ Senior members of management and letter writers to *The Gazette* argued that as co-owners, any Partner going on strike, was causing direct harm to their own business and highlighted the internal channels within the Partnership to resolve disputes. Institutions such as the Central and Branch Council, Registrars and Committees for Communication were highlighted as key to resolving disputes, however, their effectiveness often depended on local knowledge built through years of service and was dependant on staff retention to ensure the health of the democracy. Expansion and changes to the JLP's democratic structure has increasingly put the Partnership's management of industrial relations under pressure.

Membership to the JLP was also challenged by legislation following the Second World War which established a quota obligation for the employment of disabled people. As an employer with over twenty members of staff, the JLP were expected to adhere to the minimum three per cent quota. The JLP continuously struggled to meet this quota, highlighting similar challenges to the ideas of citizenship and full participation as the government throughout this period. This was an experience shared among the Partnership's competitors, Marks and Spencer (M&S) and JS Sainsbury, who all positioned themselves as responsible and caring employers, however struggled to meet their legal obligation. However, the JLP was uniquely challenged by policy such as the Access to Work scheme that employed individuals indirectly, meaning that these employees did not have the same access to Partnership benefits as other Partners and were not considered co-owners.

²⁷ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 32.

Alongside the benefits of co-ownership, Partners were also expected to recognise their responsibility and duty to the business as owners. This rationale was used by management to encourage Partners to support decisions that management reasoned would be beneficial for the business, even if it was potentially detrimental to some Partners. In addition to this rationale, the decisions of management were safeguarded to ensure that they would be able to make commercial decisions without impediment.²⁸ However, the decisions made by management were still subject to interrogation by the democratic structures which aimed to encourage management to consider both the broad impact of decisions on the business, as well as on the individuals.

The debates surrounding Sunday trading and demutualisation in the 1990s highlighted the complex nature of co-ownership in the Partnership. Both case studies highlighted tensions between Partners duty to the business and their personal wants or needs and tested the relationship between citizens' rights and managerial responsibility. The result of the Sunday trading debate and 7-day trading was seen as an unavoidable eventuality by many in the JLP. However, the role of the Partnership in campaigning for preservation of regulated Sunday trading demonstrated the challenges of duty and responsibility in the JLP to ensure that they remained competitive. Whereas the demutualisation debate focused on the rights of individual Partners as co-owners and whether their duties and responsibilities extended beyond current Partners to ensure the preservation of the Partnership model. Both debates resulted in changes had a profound

²⁸ Flanders, Pomeranz, and Woodward, p. 23.

impact on the business, through changes to trading practice or the democratic institutions of the Partnership.

Following the demutualisation debate, the JLP underwent a series of changes that aimed to modernise both the business and the democratic institutions. The constitution was heavily revised and modernised, making the document more accessible and applicable to the twenty first century. Other changes resulted in the removal of long-standing Partnership institutions such as the Committee for Communication, which were first introduced by the founder, Spedan Lewis, in 1914.²⁹ Further amendments have led to institutions such as the Partnership Council becoming formal bodies of consultation rather than decision-making which has impacted the ability of Partners to directly challenge decision-makers and has seemingly diluted their rights as citizens and co-owners.

The erosion of longstanding Partnership systems and structures has moved the JLP away from the founder's original vision for the business and the ultimate aim of "the happiness of all its members".³⁰ The focus on growth has meant that the business has increasingly identified Partners as employees, as exemplified in decisions around outsourcing, rather than as co-owners of the business or citizens within the wider community of the organisation. The innovative Partnership model, which aimed to position itself as an effective alternative method for managing business has come under increased scrutiny as the pressures to maintain a profit-making business alongside meeting the needs of Partners has increased.

²⁹ Bradley and Taylor, pp. 35–36.

³⁰ The John Lewis Partnership, *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965*, p. 14.

However, the Partnership is still often referred to in media reports where businesses have moved towards alternative ownership structures. These reports often conflate the ‘John Lewis model’ and indirect employee-ownership, however as this thesis has shown the Partnership model relies on more than just ownership. In 2019, Julian Richer, the owner of Richer Sounds, a hi-fi and television retail chain, announced that he was transferring sixty percent of shares into “a John Lewis-style trust”.³¹ Similarly, Riverford Organic, an organic vegetable delivery service, moved to one hundred per cent employee-owned in 2023 with the owner, Guy Singh-Watson, citing the JLP as influencing his decision.³² These examples show a continued interest in employee-ownership but tend to focus on the benefits for founders and the opportunity for staff to receive cash bonuses, rather than an *ideology* of partnership, as seen in the JLP.

The ideology of the JLP has been a continued mark of differentiation for the business, separating the department stores and supermarkets from their retail competitors. The Partnership model of co-ownership, supported by the ideology, has long been recognised as the reason for the success of the business, despite the recent challenges that the JLP have faced. However, the JLP has had to become increasingly competitive as the retail landscape has shifted in an attempt to both grow and preserve the business for Partners. This has then impacted Partners and their relationship to the business.

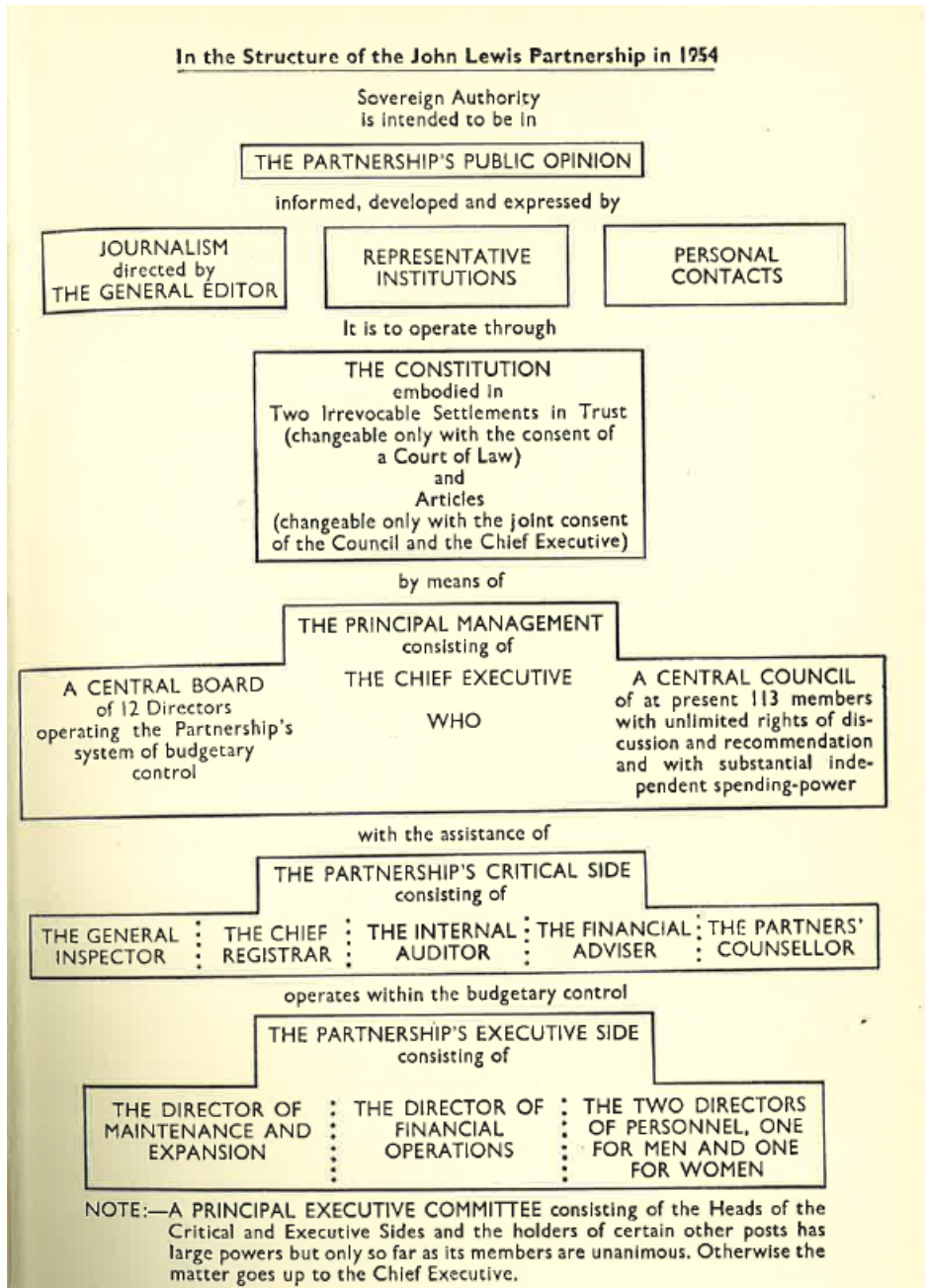
³¹ Zoe Wood, ‘Richer Sounds Founder Hands over Control of Hi-Fi and TV Firm to Staff’, *The Guardian*, 14 May 2019 <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/may/14/richer-sounds-staff-julian-richer>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

³² Sarah Butler, ‘Veg Box Firm Riverford to Be 100% Staff-Owned as Founder Sells Stake for £10m’, *The Guardian*, 19 May 2023 <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/may/19/veg-box-riverford-staff-owned-founder-sells-stake-guy-singh-watson>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

This thesis has shown that membership to JLP could be complex as Partners navigated their role as citizens in a democracy and as co-owners of the business. The experience of individual Partners was not homogenous and could vary dramatically dependant on geographical location and the investment of management in democratic institutions. Through the examination of leisure, trade unionism, disability, and duty, this thesis has demonstrated the tensions inherent in the JLP model that were often exasperated in periods of strain. These tensions stressed both the strengths and limitations of the JLP model, highlighting the differences in the systems of management and industrial relations that introduced unique problems for the business to solve. Examination of the JLP model offers an alternative perspective on contemporary issues that faced organisations through the latter half of the twentieth century.

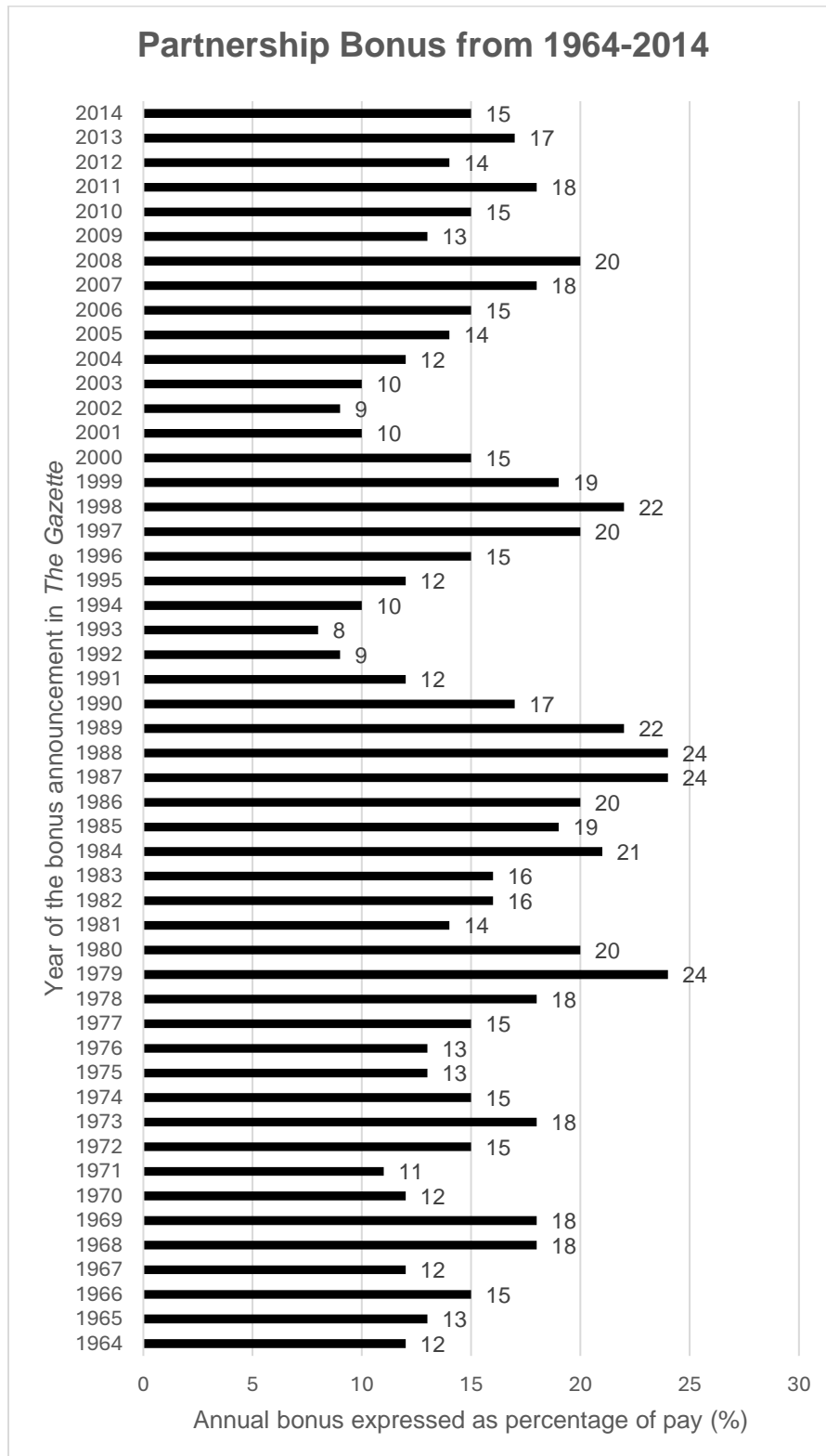
Appendix 2

'In the Structure of the John Lewis Partnership in 1954', John Spedan Lewis, Fairer Shares (London, Staples Press Limited: 1954). Reproduced with permission of the John Lewis Partnership Archive.



Appendix 3

Chart showing the percentage of Partnership Bonus from 1964-2014 using figures published annually in *The Gazette*. Publication available in the John Lewis Partnership Archive.



Bibliography

- '17: John Lewis (1925) - Never Knowingly Undersold', *Creative Review* <<https://www.creativereview.co.uk/never-knowingly-undersold/>> [accessed 25 April 2024]
- Ackers, Peter, Mick Marchington, Adrian Wilkinson, and Tony Dundon, 'Partnership and Voice, with or without Trade Unions', in *Partnership And Modernisation in Employment Relations*, ed. by Mark Stuart and Miguel Martinez Lucio (Routledge, 2005), pp. 23–45
- An Institutional History of Internal Communication in the UK, 'About the Project', 2024 <<https://historyofinternalcomms.org/about-the-project/>> [accessed 26 August 2024]
- Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition. (Verso, 2006)
- Anderson, Julie, *War, Disability and Rehabilitation in Britain* (Manchester University Press, 2011)
- Arends, Brett, 'John Lewis Sale Could Net Staff £112,000', *The Daily Telegraph*, 23 May 1998, p. 29
- Arnold-Forster, Agnes, and Alison Moulds, 'Introduction', in *Feelings and Work in Modern History*, ed. by Agnes Arnold-Forster and Alison Moulds (Bloomsbury, 2022), pp. 1–18
- Balaban, Milan, Lukáš Perutka, Simon Paye, Dalibor Savić, and Jan Herman, 'The Social Welfare System in Bata Company Towns (1920s-1950s): Between Transnational Vision and Local Settings', *International Review of Social History*, 68.1, pp. 13–40
- Barnard, Catherine, 'Sunday Trading: A Drama in Five Acts', *The Modern Law Review*, 57.3 (1994), pp. 449–60
- Barnes, Colin, 'A Brief History of Discrimination and Disabled People', in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. by Lennard J. Davis, Third (Routledge, 2010)
- Barnes, Helen, *Working for a Living? Employment, Benefits and the Living Standards of Disabled People* (The Policy Press, 2000)
- BBC News, 'End of an Era for Debenhams as Final Shops Set to Close', *BBC News*, 5 May 2021 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-56993816>> [accessed 25 March 2024]

- , 'John Lewis Scraps Bonus for First Time since 1953', *BBC News*, 17 September 2020 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-54187674>> [accessed 25 March 2024]
- , 'John Lewis to End "Never Knowingly Undersold" Price Pledge', *BBC News*, 25 February 2023 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-60522421>> [accessed 25 March 2024]
- , 'Last BHS Stores Close for Final Time after 88 Years', *BBC News*, 28 August 2016 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-37207481>> [accessed 25 March 2024]
- Bevan, Judi, *The Rise and Fall of Marks & Spencer* (Profile Books, 2007)
- Bingham, Adrian, 'The British Press and the 1918 Reform Act', *Parliamentary History*, 37.1 (2018), pp. 150–67
- Blackie, Daniel, and Alexia Moncrieff, 'State of the Field: Disability History', *History*, 107.377 (2022), pp. 789–811
- Blatchford, Jonathan, 'Acquisition of Holdrons', *John Lewis Partnership Memory Store*, 2018 <https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/branch_finder/branches_f-h/holdrons_ltd_peckham/acquisition_in_1940> [accessed 13 June 2022]
- , 'John Lewis & Partners Memory Store', *From Temporary Shop to London Landmark*, 2018 <https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/branch_finder/branches_o-r/oxford_street/post-war_years-4-2/from_temporary_shop_to_london_landmark> [accessed 26 May 2020]
- , 'John Lewis & Partners Memory Store', *Sir Bernard Miller*, 2020 <https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/people/movers_and_shakers/chairmen_of_the_john_lewis_partnership/sir_bernard_miller-3> [accessed 14 April 2020]
- , 'John Lewis & Partners Memory Store', *The First Trust Settlement, 1929*, 2018 <https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/people/movers_and_shakers/the_fouder/the_first_trust_settlement_1929> [accessed 12 November 2019]
- , 'John Lewis & Partners Memory Store', *The Early Years of Herbert Parkinson*, 2018 <<https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/head_office_and_distribution/manufacturing/herbert_parkinson/the_early_years_of_herbert_parkinson>> [accessed 11 June 2022]
- , 'John Lewis & Partners Memory Store', *John Spedan Lewis: Born into the Business in 1885*, 2019 <https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/branch_finder/branches_o-

- r/oxford_street/early_days-7-2/john_spedan_lewis_early_impact_on_the_business> [accessed 12 November 2019]
- Blatchford, Jonathan, and Imogen Hunt, 'John Lewis & Partners Memory Store', *Subsequent Chairmen of the John Lewis Partnership*, 2020 <https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/category/people/movers_and_shakers/chairmen_of_the_john_lewis_partnership> [accessed 13 August 2021]
- Bohata, Kirsti, Alexandra Jones, Mike Mantin, and Steven Thompson, *Disability in Industrial Britain: A Cultural and Literary History of Impairment in the Coal Industry, 1880-1948* (Manchester University Press, 2019)
- Bolderson, Helen, 'The Origins of the Disabled Persons Employment Quota and Its Symbolic Significance', *Journal of Social Policy*, 9.2 (1980), pp. 169–86
- Boots UK, *Boots Benevolent Fund: About the Fund*, 2022 <<https://www.boots-uk.com/corporate-social-responsibility/what-we-do/healthy-inclusive-workplace/boots-benevolent-fund/about-the-fund/>> [accessed 4 November 2022]
- Borsay, Anne, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)
- Bradley, Keith, and Simon Taylor, *Business Performance in the Retail Sector: The Experience of the John Lewis Partnership* (Clarendon Press, 1992)
- 'Breaking down Barriers', *The Waitrose Chronicle*, 9 May 2009
- Briggs, Asa, *Social Thought and Social Action: A Study of the Work of Seebohm Rowntree 1871-1954* (Longmans Green & Company, 1961)
- Brilmyer, Gracen, 'Archival Assemblages: Applying Disability Studies' Political/Relational Model to Archival Description', *Archival Science*, 18.2 (2018), pp. 95–118
- Brown, Jennifer, Esme Kirk-Wade, Carl Baker, and Sarah Barber, 'Coronavirus: A History of English Lockdown Laws', *UK Parliament House of Commons Library*, 22 December 2021 <<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9068/>> [accessed 25 March 2024]
- Brown, William, 'The Donovan Report as Evidence-based Policy', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 50.5–6 (2019), pp. 419–30
- Business Archives Council, 'Interested in Academic Collaborations? New Resources Available', *Business Archives Council*, 2020 <https://businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/news/2020/9/academic_archivist_collaboration_resources> [accessed 25 April 2024]

- Butler, Sarah, 'John Lewis Defends Plans to Build 10,000 Rental Homes on Its Land', *The Guardian*, 30 June 2023
<<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/jun/30/john-lewis-defends-plans-to-build-10000-rental-homes-on-its-land>> [accessed 25 April 2024]
- , 'Veg Box Firm Riverford to Be 100% Staff-Owned as Founder Sells Stake for £10m', *The Guardian*, 19 May 2023
<<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/may/19/veg-box-riverford-staff-owned-founder-sells-stake-guy-singh-watson>> [accessed 25 March 2024]
- Byrne, Liam, *Dragons: Ten Entrepreneurs Who Built Britain* (Head of Zeus, 2016)
- Campbell, Jane, and Mike Oliver, *Disability Politics: Understanding Our Past, Changing Our Future* (Routledge, 1996)
- Caswell, Michelle, *Urgent Archives: Enacting Liberatory Memory Work* (Routledge, 2021)
- Cathcart, Abby, 'Directing Democracy: Competing Interests and Contested Terrain in the John Lewis Partnership', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 55.4 (2013), pp. 601–20
- , 'Directing Democracy: The Case of the John Lewis Partnership' (University of Leicester, 2009)
- , 'Paradoxes of Participation: Non-Union Workplace Partnership in John Lewis', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25.6 (2014), pp. 762–80
- Clarke, Joan Simeon, *Disabled Citizens* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1951)
- Cohen, Deborah, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939*, Online (California Scholarship Online, 2012)
- Cole, Margaret, 'The Webbs and Social Theory', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 12.2 (1961), pp. 93–105
- Commission for Racial Equality, 'Ethnic Monitoring and Careers Services: A Good Practice Guide', 1991 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28327812>> [accessed 7 November 2023]
- Committee for Clubs and Social Activities, 'Minutes of the 1994-5 Committee', 1985, John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 4517
- Committee for Leisure Activities, 'Minutes of the 23rd Meeting of the Committee for Leisure Activities', 1992, John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 4251 v2
- Committee for leisure activities and adults subsidies 1973-1989, 'Subsidies for Leisure Activities', 1985, John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 4251 v1

Committee of Inquiry on the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons, 'Report of the Committee of Inquiry on the Rehabilitation, Training and Resettlement of Disabled Persons' (HMSO, 1956), Wellcome Collection
<<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ytzssjpm>> [accessed 25 September 2023]

Coopey, Richard, and Nicholas Woodward, 'The British Economy in the 1970s: An Overview', in *Britain in the 1970s*, ed. by Richard Coopey and Nicholas Woodward (UCL Press, 1996), pp. 1–34

Correspondence with D of E 1967-74, 'Correspondence between A. J. Waller of J Sainsbury Ltd and F. Scoble of Ministry of Labour Employment Exchange', 1967, Sainsbury Archive, SA/EMP/4/2

———, 'Correspondence between the Personnel Department of JS Sainsbury and the Ministry of Labour Employment Exchange', 1965, Sainsbury Archive, SA/EMP/4/2

———, 'Correspondence between the Personnel Department of JS Sainsbury and the Ministry of Labour Employment Exchange', 1972, Sainsbury Archive, SA/EMP/4/2

'———', Sainsbury Archive, SA/EMP/4/2

Cox, Pamela, and Annabel Hobley, *Shopgirls: The True Story of Life Behind the Counter* (Hutchinson, 2014)

Cox, Peter, *Spedan's Partnership* (Labatie Books, 2010)

D Greenway, *Interview Conducted for 'From an "Experiment in Industrial Democracy" to "Driving the Difference": The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014'*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13

D Young, *Interview Conducted for 'From an "Experiment in Industrial Democracy" to "Driving the Difference": The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014'*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13

Dale, Iain, ed., *Conservative Party General Election Manifestos, 1900-1997* (Routledge, 2000)

Disability Alliance, 'Access to Work', in *Disability Rights Handbook April 1994-April 1995*, 19th edn, 1994

———, 'Comments on the Manpower Services Commission's Discussion Document "The Quota Scheme for the Employment of Disabled People"', 1980, Peter Townsend Collection, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex, File 78.06

———, 'Employment Services for People with Disabilities', in *Disability Rights Handbook for 1981*, 1980

- , 'Employment Services for People with Disabilities', in *Disability Rights Handbook for 1983*, 1982
- , 'MSC'S Discussion Document on the Quota Scheme', 1980, Peter Townsend Collection, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex, File 78.06
- Disability Manifesto, 'An Agenda for the 1990s', 1991, Peter Townsend Collection, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex, Box 79
- 'Disabled We Are...Incapable We're Not', *JS Journal*, October 1990
- 'Donovan Report and White Paper "In Place of Strife"', 1969, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 4344/c
- Donovan Report Industrial Relations/Trade Unions, 'Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations: Evidence of the John Lewis Partnership', 1965, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 4344/c
- Dorey, Peter, *Comrades in Conflict* (Manchester University Press, 2019)
- Dr Stephen Duckworth, 'Access for All Conference Hosted by Sainsbury's', 1995, Sainsbury Archive, SA/CR/CH/1/5/12
- Edgerton, David, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation* (Penguin Random House, 2019)
- Edmonds, John, 'The Bullock Committee, Industrial Democracy, and the Trade Unions: The Revolution That Never Was', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 41.1 (2020), pp. 213–28
- 'Edna Makes Tooting's Biggest-Ever Single Sale', *St Michael News*, 16 September 1955
- Eley, Jonathan, 'House of Fraser Calls in Administrators', *Financial Times*, 10 August 2018 <<https://www.ft.com/content/fd0ab332-9c68-11e8-9702-5946bae86e6d>> [accessed 23 April 2024]
- Employment Services Agency, 'The Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts 1944 and 1958 Employers Obligations', Sainsbury Archive, SA/EMP/4/2
- Engel, Alexander, 'The Bang after the Boom: Understanding Financialization', *Studies in Contemporary History*, 12.3 (2015), pp. 500–510
- Evans, Eric J, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (Routledge, 2018)
- 'Fair Chance for Disabled People', *St Michael News*, June 1990
- Faraday, Judy, 'John Lewis & Partners Memory Store', *A New Home for Our Archive*, 2018

<https://johnlewismemorystore.org.uk/content/community/john_lewis_community/heritage_centre/a_new_home_for_our_archive> [accessed 5 May 2021]

Finlayson, Geoffrey, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990* (Oxford University Press, 1994)

'Fit for Work', *Daily Mail* (19 September 1979), 25902 edition, p. 10

'———', *Financial Times* (9 October 1979), 27986 edition

Flanders, Allan D, Ruth Pomeranz, and Joan Woodward, *Experiment in Industrial Democracy: A Study of the John Lewis Partnership* (Faber & Faber, 1968)

Fraser, Sir Hugh, *The Representation of the People Act, 1918 with Explanatory Notes* (Sweet and Maxwell, 1918)

Fraser, W. Hamish, *A History of British Trade Unionism 1700-1998* (Macmillan, 1999)

Galbraith, John Kenneth, *Economics in Perspective: A Critical History* (Princeton University Press, 1987)

'General Welfare', *St Michael News: Special Report*, August 1979

de Gier, Erik, *Capitalist Workingman's Paradises Revisited* (Amsterdam University Press, 2016)

Glancey, Jonathan, *A Very British Revolution: 150 Years of John Lewis* (Laurence King Publishing, 2014)

Glendinning, Victoria, *Family Business: An Intimate History of John Lewis & The Partnership* (William Collins, 2021)

Gourvish, Terry, 'What Can Business History Tell Us about Business Performance?', *Competition & Change*, 10.4 (2006), pp. 375–92

Grant, Matthew, 'Historicizing Citizenship in Post-War Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 59.4 (2016), pp. 1187–1206

Grapper, John, "'Staff Partners" Titles to End John Lewis Rank and File Unrest', *Financial Times*, 26 June 1990

Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People, 'A Brief History of Disabled People's Self-Organisation', 2013

<<https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/research/brief-history-disabled-peoples-self-organisation-pdf/>> [accessed 10 November 2023]

Green, Alix R, "'Race", Retailing and the Windrush Generation: Principle and Practice in the John Lewis Partnership's Recruitment of Commonwealth Arrivals 1950-1962', in *Retail and Community: Business, Charity and the End of Empire*, ed. by

- George Campbell Gosling, Alix R Green, and Grace Millar (Bristol University Press, 2024)
- , “‘Secret Lists and Sanctions’”: The Blacklisting of the John Lewis Partnership and the Politics of Pay in 1970s Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 30.2 (2019), pp. 205–30
- Green, Alix R, and Erin Lee, ‘From Transaction to Collaboration: Redefining the Academic-Archivist Relationship in Business Collections’, *Archives and Records*, 41.1 (2020), pp. 32–51
- Gurney, Peter, ‘Co-Operation and the “new Consumerism” in Interwar England’, *Business History*, 54.6 (2012), pp. 905–24
- , *Co-Operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930* (Manchester University Press, 1996)
- , ‘The Battle of the Consumer in Postwar Britain’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 77.4 (2005), pp. 956–87
- H Dance, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13
- H Peters, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2020, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13
- Hall, Amanda, ‘A Look inside the John Lewis Partnership Heritage Centre’, *Maidenhead Advertiser*, 7 October 2013 <<https://www.maidenhead-advertiser.co.uk/news/17308/VIDEO--A-look-inside-the.html>> [accessed 29 January 2024]
- Hampton, Jameel, *Disability and the Welfare State in Britain* (Bristol University Press, 2016)
- , ‘The 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act—Fifty Years On’, *Disability & Society*, 35.5 (2020), pp. 831–36
- Hansard, ‘Written Answers, Vol. 849, Col. 335’, 1973 <<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1973-01-30/debates/4f923b0a-b53a-4c27-9c99-2a1967a17376/WrittenAnswers#main-content>> [accessed 5 October 2023]
- Hardman, Robert, ‘Commons Sketch: Rumbo Buys Time in Shopping Row’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 November 1991

- Harris, Jose, “Contract” and “Citizenship”, in *The Ideas That Shaped Post-War Britain*, ed. by David Marquand and Anthony Seldon (Fontana Press, 1996)
- , *William Beveridge* (Oxford University Press, 1997)
- Hay-Gibson, Naomi, ‘Interviews via VoIP: Benefits and Disadvantages within a PhD Study of SMEs’, *Library and Information Research*, 33.105 (2009), pp. 1756–1086
- Haynes, Kathryn, ‘Other Lives in Accounting: Critical Reflections on Oral History Methodology in Action’, *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 21.3 (2010), pp. 221–31
- Heinemann, Kieran, *Playing the Market: Retail Investment and Speculation in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2021)
- Heller, Michael, and Michael Rowlinson, ‘Imagined Corporate Communities: Historical Sources and Discourses’, *British Journal of Management*, 31 (2020), pp. 752–68
- , ‘The British House Magazine 1945 to 2015: The Creation of Family, Organisation and Markets’, *Business History*, 62.6 (2020), pp. 1002–26
- Hilton, Matthew, *Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement* (Cambridge University Press, 2003)
- , ‘The Female Consumer and the Politics of Consumption in Twentieth-Century Britain’, *The Historical Journal*, 45.1 (2002), pp. 103–28
- Hoffman, P.C., *They Also Serve* (Porcupine Press, 1949)
- Hordes, Stanley M, ‘Does He Who Pays the Piper Call the Tune? Historians, Ethics, and the Community’, *The Public Historian*, 8.1 (1986), pp. 53–56
- ‘How We Deal With 14,000 Appeals a Year’, *St Michael News: Special Report*, August 1979
- ‘Industrial Relations: Donovan Report and White Paper “In Place of Strife”’, 1969, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 4344/c
- Inside John Lewis*, dir. by Elizabeth Bonner Allan (BBC 4, 2010)
- Institute of Internal Communication, ‘Celebrating 75 Years of IoIC with Michael Heller and Joe Chick’, The Future of Internal Communication
<<https://www.ioic.org.uk/resource/celebrating-75-years-of-ioic-with-michael-heller-and-joe-chick.html>>

Interview closed to public (1), *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2020, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13

Interview closed to public (2), *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2020, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13

Interview closed to public (3), *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13

Interview closed to public (4), *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13

Interview closed to public (5), *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2022, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13

‘It’s Time to Liberalise Our Outdated Sunday Trading Laws’, *Talking Retail*, 16 June 2014 <<https://www.talkingretail.com/opinion/talking-points/time-liberalise-outdated-sunday-trading-laws-16-06-2014/>> [accessed 19 March 2024]

J Hutton, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2020, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13

J Sainsbury Limited Medical Manual, ‘Criteria for Rejection from Employment for New Applicants’, 1979, Sainsbury Archive, SA/BRA/4/4/8

———, ‘Disabled Persons’, 1979, Sainsbury Archive, SA/BRA/4/4/8

———, ‘Medical Records as Privileged Information’, 1979, Sainsbury Archive, SA/BRA/4/4/8

Jahshan, Elias, ‘1300 Jobs at Risk as John Lewis Shuts down 8 Stores but Reopens Another 9’, *Retail Gazette*, 9 July 2020 <<https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2020/07/job-cuts-john-lewis-shuts-down-8-stores-reopens-9-lockdown/>> [accessed 25 March 2024]

Jewson, Nick, and David Mason, “Race”, Employment and Equal Opportunities: Towards a Political Economy and an Agenda for the 1990s’, *The Sociological Review*, 42.4 (1994), pp. 591–617

‘Jobs with Status’, *JS Journal*, October 1997

John Lewis & Co. Ltd, 'Classified Advertising', *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 January 1965, p. 22

John Lewis Partnership, 'All the Right Connections', *The Gazette*, 8 July 2006

———, 'Inside Story', *The Gazette*, 1 October 2010

———, 'John Lewis Partnership Plans Not to Reopen Eight John Lewis Shops from Lockdown as It Rebalances Store Estate', 24 March 2021
<<https://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/media/press/y2021/jlp-plans-not-to-reopen-eight-jl-shops.html>> [accessed 25 March 2024]

———, 'Supplement', *The Gazette*, 29 April 1950, pp. i–xi

'John Lewis Partnership Memory Store', *Sabeema*, 2018
<https://jlpmemorystore.org.uk/content/being_a_partner/leisure/clubs_societies/sabeema_art_club/sabeema> [accessed 5 March 2024]

John, Steve, *The Persuaders: When Lobbyists Matter* (Springer, 2002)

Jordan, David, 'A New Employment Programme Wanted for Disabled People' (Disability Alliance Publications, 1979), Peter Townsend Collection, Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex, Box 79

K Temple, *Interview Conducted for 'From an "Experiment in Industrial Democracy" to "Driving the Difference": The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014'*, 2022, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13

Kennedy, Carol, *The Merchant Princes: Family, Fortune and Philanthropy* (Hutchinson, 2000)

Kessler, Sid, and Gill Palmer, 'The Commission on Industrial Relations in Britain 1969-74: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation', *Employee Relations*, 18.4 (1996), pp. 6–96

Kingsley, Patrick, 'What Exactly Is the "John Lewis Model"?', *The Guardian*, 22 February 2012 <<https://www.theguardian.com/education/shortcuts/2012/feb/22/what-is-john-lewis-model>> [accessed 6 February 2024]

Kowalsky, Meaghan, "'This Honourable Obligation": The King's National Roll Scheme for Disabled Ex-Servicemen 1915-1944', *European Review of History - Revue Européenne d'Histoire*, 14.4 (2007), pp. 567–84

L Judd, *Interview Conducted for 'From an "Experiment in Industrial Democracy" to "Driving the Difference": The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014'*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13

Lancaster, Bill, *The Department Store* (Leicester University Press, 1995)

- Langhamer, Claire, “‘Astray in a Dark Forest’? The Emotional Politics of Reconstruction Britain’, in *Total War: An Emotional History*, ed. by Lucy Noakes, Claire Langhamer, and Claudia Siebrecht (British Academy, 2020), pp. 137–56
- , ‘Feelings, Women and Work in the Long 1950s’, *Women’s History Review*, 26.1 (2017), pp. 77–92
- ‘Launch of New Charity Project’, *St Michael News*, April 1981
- Laundon, Melinda, Abby Cathcart, and Paula McDonald, ‘Just Benefits? Employee Benefits and Organisational Justice’, *Employee Relations: The International Journal*, 41.4 (2019), pp. 708–23
- Lawson, Alex, ‘Allders to Close after 150 Years in Business’, *Retail Week*, 10 September 2012 <<https://www.retail-week.com/department-stores/allders-to-close-after-150-years-in-business/5040470.article>> [accessed 25 March 2024]
- Lawson, Anna, ‘Disability and Employment in the Equality Act 2010: Opportunities Seized, Lost and Generated’, *Industrial Law Journal*, 40.4 (2011), pp. 359–83
- Lewis, Jane, *Women in Britain since 1945: Women, Family, Work and the State in the Post-War Years* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992)
- Lewis, John Spedan, ‘Appendix I: The First Irrevocable Settlement in Trust April 1929’, in *Fairer Shares* (Staples Press Limited, 1954)
- , “‘Appendix II: The Second Irrevocable Settlement in Trust April 1950’”, in *Fairer Shares* (Staples Press Limited, 1950)
- , *Fairer Shares* (Staples Press Limited, 1954)
- , *Partnership For All* (Kerr-Cross Publishing, 1948)
- Living Wage Foundation, ‘John Lewis Cleaners Miss Out on Bonus and Living Wage’, *Living Wage Foundation*, 7 March 2013 <<https://www.livingwage.org.uk/news/john-lewis-cleaners-miss-out-bonus-and-living-wage>> [accessed 12 June 2022]
- Lo Iacono, Valeria, Paul Symonds, and David HK Brown, ‘Skype as a Tool for Qualitative Research Interviews’, *Sociological Research Online*, 21.2 (2016), pp. 103–17
- Luks, Timo, ‘Building the “House of Industry”: Factory Citizenship and Gendered Spaces at Cadbury’s and Rowntree’s’, *Labour History Review*, 85.3, pp. 233–52
- M Thomson, *Interview Conducted for ‘From an “Experiment in Industrial Democracy” to “Driving the Difference”: The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014’*, 2021, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13

- MacKay, James, 'Year of the Disabled', *Financial Times*, 11 April 1981, 28444 edition
- Maclean, Mairi, Gareth Shaw, and Charles Harvey, 'Business as Service? Human Relations and the British Interwar Management Movement', *Human Relations*, 75.8 (2022), pp. 1585–1614
- Maclennan, 'House of Commons Debate', 1993, vol 233, col 842
- MacPherson, Hugh, ed., *John Spedan Lewis 1885-1963* (John Lewis, 1985)
- Maher, Imelda, 'The New Sunday: Reregulating Sunday Trading', *Modern Law Review*, 58.1 (1995), pp. 72–86
- 'Make It an Able Year', *St Michael News*, January 1981
- Manpower Services Commission, 'Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People', 1984, The National Archives, FD 7/1946
- , 'MSC Review and Plan', 1977, The National Archives, ET2/44
- Mantin, Mike, 'Coalmining and the National Scheme for Disabled Ex-Servicemen after the First World War', *Social History*, 41.2 (2016), pp. 155–70
- Marinetto, Michael, 'The Historical Development of Business Philanthropy: Social Responsibility in the New Corporate Economy', *Business History*, 41.4 (1999), pp. 1–20
- Marshall, T.H., and Tom Bottomore, 'Citizenship and Social Class', in *Citizenship and Social Class* (Pluto Press, 1992), pp. 1–52, doi:10.2307/j.ctt18mvns1.5
- Martin López, Tara, *The Winter of Discontent: Myth, Memory, and History* (Liverpool University Press, 2014)
- May, P, D N Barrett, J A Powell, and B Cowderoy, 'Donovan Report and White Paper "In Place of Strife": Registration with Commission on Industrial Relations', 1969, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 4344/c
- Mcllroy, John, and Alan Campbell, 'The High Tide of Trade Unionism: Mapping Industrial Politics 1964-79', in *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism?: Trade Unions and Industrial Politics*, ed. by John Mcllroy, Nina Fishman, and Alan Campbell (Merlin, 2007), pp. 93–132
- 'Mencap's Pathway to Employment', *JS Journal*, June 1985
- Mercer, Helen, 'Retailer–Supplier Relationships before and after the Resale Prices Act, 1964: A Turning Point in British Economic History?', *Enterprise & Society*, 15.1 (2014), pp. 132–65

- , ‘The Abolition of Resale Price Maintenance in Britain in 1964: A Turning Point for British Manufacturers?’, *Working Papers in Economic History*, 39.98 (1998)
- Miller, Michael B., *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store* (Princeton University Press, 1981)
- Millward, Gareth, ‘Social Security Policy and the Early Disability Movement—Expertise, Disability, and the Government, 1965–77’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 26.2 (2015), pp. 274–97
- ‘Minute Book of the Special Committee Appointed to Consider Sharing of Power’, 1969, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 1099
- Moss, Michael, and Alison Turton, *A Legend of Retailing: House of Fraser* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989)
- Moulds, Alison, ‘Shop Assistants, “living-in” and Emotional Health, 1880s-1930s’, in *Feelings and Work in Modern History*, ed. by Agnes Arnold-Forster and Alison Moulds (Bloomsbury, 2022), pp. 37–57
- National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) Act, 9 & 10 Geo. 6, 1946, CH. 62*
<<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1946/62/contents/enacted>> [accessed 27 April 2024]
- Nazir, Sahar, ‘John Lewis Named “Disability Confident Leader”’, *Retail Gazette*, 27 February 2019 <<https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2019/02/john-lewis-named-disability-confident-leader-hiring-staff-disabilities>> [accessed 19 June 2023]
- Nell, Dawn, Andrew Alexander, Adrian Bailey, and Gareth Shaw, ‘Investigating Shopper Narratives of the Supermarket in Early Post-War England, 1945-75’, *Oral History*, 37.1 (2009), pp. 61–73
- Nicholson, Helen, Ron Beadle, and Richard Slack, ‘Corporate Philanthropy as a Context for Moral Agency, a MacIntyrean Enquiry’, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 167 (2019), pp. 589–603
- O’Higgins, Eleanor, ‘The Ethos of Partnership: The John Lewis Partnership’, in *Progressive Business Models: Creating Sustainable and Pro-Social Enterprise*, ed. by E. O’Higgins and L. Zsolnai (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)
- Oliver, Michael, *Understanding Disability* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)
- Oliver, Michael, and Colin Barnes, *The New Politics of Disablement* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)
- Oliver, Mike, ‘The Social Model of Disability: Thirty Years On’, *Disability & Society*, 28.7 (2013), pp. 1024–26

- Paranque, Bernard, and Hugh Willmott, 'Cooperatives—Saviours or Gravediggers of Capitalism? Critical Performativity and the John Lewis Partnership', *Organization*, 21.5 (2014), pp. 604–25
- 'Partnership Bonus 1979-80', *The Gazette*, 8 March 1980
- Partnership Training Film*, dir. by Frank Work, 1960, The John Lewis Partnership Digital Archive
- Perks, Rob, "'Corporations Are People Too!": Business and Corporate Oral History in Britain', *Oral History*, 38.1 (2010), pp. 36–54
- Peter Jones, *The Gazette*, 20 September 1919
- , *The Gazette*
- Portas, Mary, 'Open Letter to John Lewis Chairman Sharon White and New Chief Executive Nish Kankiwala', *LinkedIn* <https://www.linkedin.com/posts/mary-portas-2420108a_john-lewis-an-open-letter-activity-7044941439293607936-pY5V/> [accessed 25 March 2024]
- 'Positive about Disabled People', *Daily Mail*, 7 March 1994, p. 22
- 'Power: Sharing of, Committee 1968-1971', John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2060/xx
- Pratley, Nils, 'Theresa May's Plan to Put Workers in Boardrooms Is Extraordinary', *The Guardian*, 11 July 2016, 20 April 2020 <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/nils-pratley-on-finance/2016/jul/11/theresa-may-plan-workers-boardroom-reform-extraordinary-tories>>
- Price, E. H., 'Notice', 1975, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2532/k Industrial Disputes
- Pyper, Doug, 'Trade Union Legislation 1979-2010', *House of Commons Library*, CBP 7882 (2017)
- Quarter, Jack, *Beyond the Bottom Line: Socially Innovate Business Owners* (Quorum Books, 2000)
- R Wynn, *Interview Conducted for 'From an "Experiment in Industrial Democracy" to "Driving the Difference": The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014'*, 2022, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13
- Rappaport, Erika, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton University Press, 1999)
- Rees, Goronwy, *St Michael: A History of Marks & Spencer* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969)

- 'Report of the Committee on Sharing Power', 1969, John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2060/xxxvi(f)
- Richards, Penny L., and Susan Burch, 'Documents, Ethics, and the Disability Historian', in *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, ed. by Michael Rembis, Catherine Kudlick, and Kim E. Nielsen (Oxford University Press, 2018)
- Richter, Philip, 'Seven Days' Trading Make One Weak? The Sunday Trading Issue as an Index of Secularization', *British Journal of Sociology*, 1994, pp. 333–48
- Rigby, Chloe, 'Waitrose Sees Online Grocery Orders Double since the Beginning of 2020', *Internet Retailing*, 16 June 2020 <<https://internetretailing.net/waitrose-sees-online-grocery-orders-double-since-the-beginning-of-2020-21562>> [accessed 25 March 2024]
- Ritschel, Daniel, *The Politics of Planning: The Debate on Economic Planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford Academic, 2011) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198206477.003.0009>> [accessed 4 March 2024]
- Roberts, B. C., 'Fair Deal at Work', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 6.3 (1968), pp. 360–63
- Rose, Sonya O, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford University Press, 2003)
- Rowntree, Seebohm, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (Macmillan, 1901)
- , *Poverty and Progress: A Second Social Survey of York* (Longmans Green & Company, 1941)
- , *Poverty and the Welfare State: A Third Social Survey of York Dealing with Only Economic Questions* (Longmans Green & Company, 1951)
- Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, 'Miss Joan Woodward', 1965, The National Archives, LAB 28/9/259
- , 'Mr Allan Flanders [PM/62]', 1965, The National Archives, LAB 28/12/333
- Sainsbury, Sally, *Registered as Disabled* (The Social Administration Research Trust, 1970)
- Sainsbury's, 'Annual Report and Accounts 1986', 1986, Sainsbury Archive, SA/CO/5/1/37
- Salaman, Graeme, and John Storey, *A Better Way of Doing Business?: Lessons from the John Lewis Partnership* (Oxford University Press, 2016)

- Sanders, Lise, *Consumer Fantasies: Labor, Leisure, and the London Shopgirl, 1880-1920* (Ohio State University Press, 2006)
- Seed, M, 'Employers' Forum on Disability', *Occupation Medicine*, 53.2 (2003)
- Seifert, Roger, 'Big Bangs and Cold Wars: The British Industrial Relations Tradition after Donovan (1965-2015)', *Employee Relations*, 37.6 (2015), pp. 746–60
- Shah, Sonali, *Career Success of Disabled High-Flyers* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2005)
- Shaw, Gareth, and Andrew Alexander, 'British Co-Operative Societies as Retail Innovators: Interpreting the Early Stages of the Self-Service Revolution', *Business History*, 50.1 (2008), pp. 62–78
- 'Shaw Trust Placement', *The Waitrose Chronicle*, 11 February 2011, 12
- Siméon, Ophélie, *Robert Owen's Experiment at New Lanark: From Paternalism to Socialism* (Springer, 2017)
- Simpson, Emma, and Lucy Hooker, 'John Lewis Considers Plans to Change Staff-Owned Structure', *BBC News*, 19 March 2023
<<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-65006218>> [accessed 25 March 2024]
- Sloman, Peter, 'Rethinking a Progressive Movement: The Liberal and Labour Parties in the 1945 General Election', *Historical Research*, 84.226 (2010)
- Smith, George David, and Laurence E Steadman, 'Present Value of Corporate History', *Havard Business Review*, 59.6 (1981), pp. 164–73
- Steering Committee Industrial Partnership Association Conference, 'Notes for Working Party Report' (Tavistock Human Relations, 1975), Wellcome Collection, SA/TIH/B/2/56/4/6
- Stephens, Mark, 'Mortgage Market Deregulation and Its Consequences', *Housing Studies*, 22.2 (2007), pp. 201–20
- Stone, Deborah A, *The Disabled State* (Temple University Press, 1985)
- 'Submission by the John Lewis Partnership Ltd Relating to the System of Worker-Ownership and Profit Sharing', 1965, The National Archives, LAB 28/132
- Subsidies for Leisure Activities: A Report by the Committee for Leisure Activities, 'Draft Gazette Article Circulated to Members of the Committee for Leisure Activities', 1985, John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 4251 v1

Summerfield, Penny, 'The "Levelling of Class"', in *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War*, ed. by Harold L. Smith (Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 179–207

T Keith, *Interview Conducted for 'From an "Experiment in Industrial Democracy" to "Driving the Difference": The John Lewis Partnership Co-Ownership Model 1964-2014'*, 2020, JLP Archive, Acc/2024/13

Thatcher, Margaret, 'Speech on Employment of Disabled People', *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*, 1984 <<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105788>> [accessed 4 October 2023]

'The Acquisition of Odney', *John Lewis Partnership Memory Store*, 2018 <https://jlpmemorystore.org.uk/content/being_a_partner/leisure/residential_clubs/the_odney_club/the_acquisition_of_odney> [accessed 4 November 2022]

'The Chairman at Central Council', *The Gazette*, 25 May 1996

The Disability Alliance, 'Poverty and Low Income Amongst Disabled People: A Submission to the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Incomes and Wealth - Lower Income Reference', 1977, Peter Townsend Collection, University of Essex, Albert Sloman Library, 78.03 D. A. Drafts/Reports, Box 78

The Independent, 'Disastrous to Demutualise John Lewis', 7 August 1999

The John Lewis Partnership, 'A Blueprint for Our New Democracy', *The Gazette*, 29 May 2009

———, 'A Decision for Parliament (Supplement)', *The Gazette*, 6 November 1993

———, 'Adventure Playground', *The Gazette*, 4 April 2008

———, 'An Introduction to MIND Campaign', *Synapse*, February 1972, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2715

———, 'Appendix II: Text of the Settlement of April 1929', in *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965* (John Lewis and Company Limited, 1965)

———, 'Appendix IV: The Settlement of April, 1950', in *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965* (John Lewis and Company Limited, 1965)

———, 'Application of Partnership Rules and Regulations to Stead McAlpin, Herbert Parkinson and Borval', *The Gazette*, 3 January 1970

———, 'Background to the Agenda', *The Gazette*, 31 August 1991

———, 'Box Office', *The Gazette*, 2 February 1980

———, 'Box Office', *The Gazette*, 9 September 1989

- , 'Branch Charities Commission Show Increased Confidence', *The Gazette*, 31 October 1998
- , 'Branch Councils and Industrial Disputes', 1975, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2532/k Industrial Disputes
- , 'Business: The Closing of Holdron's', *The Gazette*, 19 February 1949
- , 'Central Council Gives Overwhelming Support to Continuation of Partnership's "Unique Democratic Structure"', *The Gazette*, 25 September 1999
- , 'Central Council Pulls No Punches"', *The Gazette*, 25 September 1999
- , 'Central Council Summary of Proceedings on 9 February', 21 February 1987
- , 'Central Council: Summary of Proceedings on 21 September', *The Gazette*, 3 October 1992
- , 'Central Council: Summary of Proceedings on 23 May, Part 1', *The Gazette*, 11 June 1994
- , 'Central Council: Summary of Proceedings on Monday 6 February', *The Gazette*, 18 February 1984
- , 'Central Councillors' Questions to the Chairman', *The Gazette*, 21 May 1977
- , 'Chairman Answers Councillors' Questions', *The Gazette*, 26 May 2001
- , 'Change Afoot on the Partnership Leisure Scene', *The Gazette*, 31 October 1998
- , 'Colonial Living Arrives at Odney', *The Gazette*, 8 July 2006, 5
- , 'Comment by the Department of Maintenance and Expansion', *The Gazette*, 7 January 1950
- , 'Committee for Ways and Means: Report of a Meeting Held on 21 August', *The Gazette*, 30 August 1986
- , 'Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy', *The Gazette*, 10 April 1976
- , 'Committees for Communication', *The Gazette*, 4 January 1964
- , 'Constituencies for the House Councils', *The Gazette*, 6 July 1940
- , 'Consulting Partners on a New Constitution', *The Gazette*, 24 April 1999
- , 'Co-Partnership in Europe', *The Gazette*, 25 March 1972

- , 'Disablement Must Be Disclosed', *The Gazette*, 10 December 1949
- , 'Displacement of Present Partners by Ex-Service Men Having Some Disability', *The Gazette*, 14 April 1923
- , 'Ensuring the Voice of the "ordinary" Partner Is Heard', *The Gazette*, 18 March 1995
- , 'Ethnic Monitoring', 25 March 1995
- , 'Exchange between Da Mihi Plus and T G Andrews, Director of Personnel', *The Gazette*, 1 February 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Exclusions under Rule 3', *The Gazette*, 4 January 1964
- , 'Experiments in Participation', 15 January 1972
- , 'Experts in Wool', *The Gazette*, 1 February 1975
- , 'Fifty Years Afloat', *The Gazette*, 14 April 2001
- , 'For Better or Worse? The Industrial Relations Bill', *The Gazette*, 9 January 1971
- , 'From the Public Gallery', *The Gazette*, 21 September 2002
- , 'From the Public Gallery', *The Gazette*, 29 November 1969
- , 'From the Strangers' Gallery', 1975, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2532/k Industrial Disputes
- , 'George Henry Lee Branch Council Discusses Speke', *The Gazette*, 23 August 1975
- , 'Giving Back to the Community', *The Gazette*, 30 October 1999
- , 'Going for Gold', *The Gazette*, 8 July 2006
- , 'Interruption of Work at Speke', *The Gazette*, 1 February 1975
- , 'It's D-Day on Monday', *The Gazette*, 13 February 1971
- , 'John Lewis Centenary, 1964', *The Gazette*, 23 June 1962
- , 'John Lewis Council', 2004, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 4504
- , 'John Lewis Partnership Announces First Proposed Locations for Rental Homes', *John Lewis Partnership*, 9 June 2022

- <<https://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/media/press/y2022/jlp-announces-first-proposed-locations-for-rental-homes.html>> [accessed 25 March 2024]
- , 'John Lewis Partnership Appoints Sharon White as Chairman', 6 June 2019 <<https://johnlewispartnership.co.uk/media/press/y2019/john-lewis-partnership-appoints-sharon-white-as-chairman.html>> [accessed 25 March 2024]
- , 'John Lewis Partnership, Corporate Responsibility Report 2017/2018', 2018 <<https://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/content/dam/cws/pdfs/our-responsibilities/2018/jlp-cr-report-201718-digital.pdf>> [accessed 13 June 2023]
- , 'Joint Conciliation Committee of John Lewis and Company, Ltd., and the Transport and General Workers' Union', *The Gazette*, 10 July 1948
- , 'Learning from Statistics', *The Gazette*, 14 June 1997
- , 'Leisure', *The Gazette*, 11 December 1982
- , 'Letter by All for One', *The Gazette*, 24 August 1985, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Anon', *The Gazette*, 23 March 2007, section Letters
- , 'Letter by Anon', *The Gazette*, 12 June 2009, section Gazette letters
- , 'Letter by Anon', *The Gazette*, 1 February 2013, section Gazette letters
- , 'Letter by Anon', *The Gazette*, 25 January 2013, section Gazette letters
- , 'Letter by Astounded (and Others)', *The Gazette*, 6 May 2006, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Butcher's Mate', *The Gazette*, 8 February 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Bye and Response', *The Gazette*, 14 July 2001, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by C A M', *The Gazette*, 29 May 1976, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Caring Branch Councillor', *The Gazette*, 26 August 2000, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Carl Marks', *The Gazette*, 30 September 2000, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Carpet Boy', *The Gazette*, 26 August 2000, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Cripple', *The Gazette*, 21 June 2003, section Readers' letters

- , 'Letter by Disabled and Grateful', *The Gazette*, 1 February 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Earnest', *The Gazette*, 1 November 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Earnest Partner', *The Gazette*, 8 November 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Enough Is Enough', *The Gazette*, 23 August 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Furious', *The Gazette*, 8 February 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by H E Baker', *The Gazette*, 22 November 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Hans Peters', *The Gazette*, 23 March 2007, section Letters
- , 'Letter by Jolly Livid Partner', *The Gazette*, 9 August 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Legal Right', *The Gazette*, 12 August 2000, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Non-Union Worker', *The Gazette*, 15 February 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Party Animal', *The Gazette*, 29 November 1997, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Proud of It', *The Gazette*, 14 January 1984, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Publish and Be Damned', *The Gazette*, 8 March 1980, section Readers' Letters
- , 'Letter by Radio Amateurs', *The Gazette*, 26 February 1996, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Schroeder', 11 December 1971, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Sir John Falstaff', *The Gazette*, 1 April 1995, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Two Anxious Partners', *The Gazette*, 5 March 1966, section Readers' Letters
- , 'Letter by Two Hats Are Better than One', *The Gazette*, 7 April 2001, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Uriah', *The Gazette*, 19 August 1989, section Readers' letters

- , 'Letter by Very Concerned', *The Gazette*, 9 August 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Very Eager Partner', *The Gazette*, 19 August 2000, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Viewer', *The Gazette*, 3 March 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Wise Owl', *The Gazette*, 15 July 2000, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letter by Would Vote For It', *The Gazette*, 12 August 2000, section Readers' letters
- , 'Letters between Mr. Henry and Mr. Legg, John Lewis Partnership and Mr. Robinson of the Transport General Workers' Union', 1975, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2532/k Industrial Disputes
- , 'Letters by Realist, Speaker and Loyalty', *The Gazette*, 22 February 1975
- , 'Like Being Executed', *The Gazette*, 13 April 1968
- , 'Losses and Dishonesty', *The Gazette*, 6 June 1964, 453
- , 'Making a Difference', *The Gazette*, 28 October 2000
- , 'Measuring Our Success', *The Gazette*, 11 September 2004
- , 'Memorandum 10,303 Dated 27.12.63 from the Chairman to the Clerk to the Central Council', *The Gazette*, 4 January 1964
- , 'Monthly Reports to the Chairman', *The Gazette*, 10 February 1973
- , 'Monthly Reports to the Chairman', *The Gazette*, 15 January 1977
- , 'Network Roadshow "Fantastically Insightful"', *The Gazette*, 15 July 2016
- , 'Notes and News', *The Gazette*, 20 July 1946
- , 'Notes and News', *The Gazette*, 28 September 1946
- , 'Notes and News', *The Gazette*, 12 August 1950
- , 'Odney', *The Gazette*, 26 March 1927
- , 'Official Notices', *The Gazette*, 5 October 1963
- , 'Out with the Old, in with the New, as Voting Starts for Local Forums', *The Gazette*, 28 September 2007

- , 'Partners' Handbook 7th Edition', 1963, John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 221/4
- , 'Partners Off-Day', *The Gazette*, 9 September 1989
- , 'Partners Off-Duty', *The Gazette*, 24 August 1985
- , 'Partners Registered as Disabled', *The Gazette*, 24 May 1958
- , 'Partners' Views Influence Content and Rules for next Year's Carnival', *The Gazette*, 30 October 1999
- , 'Partnership Leisure Scene', *The Gazette*, 31 October 1998
- , 'Powered by Our Principles', *The Gazette*, 19 March 2005
- , 'Professional Event Qualification "on Offer" for Social Secretaries', *The Gazette*, 30 October 1999
- , 'Rank and File - a Proposed Alternative', *The Gazette*, 23 June 1990
- , 'Recent Events at Speke', *The Gazette*, 30 August 1975
- , 'Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Charitable Giving', *The Gazette*, 8 June 1996
- , 'Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Partnership Residential Centres (Supplement)', *The Gazette*, 17 October 1992
- , 'Report of the Committee for Clubs and Social Activities', *The Gazette*, 2 December 2000
- , 'Report on the Partnership', *The Gazette*, 22 May 1971
- , 'Report on the Partnership', *The Gazette*, 20 May 1972
- , 'Report on the Partnership Council', *The Gazette*, 1 February 2013
- , 'Reports to the Chairman', *The Gazette*, 3 October 1992
- , 'Reports to the Chairman', *The Gazette*, 16 July 2005
- , 'Reports to the Chairman', *The Gazette*, 3 October 1998
- , 'Representation on the New Partnership Council 2003', *The Gazette*, 14 December 2002
- , 'Response by Andy Street to "Disabled Partners" by Cripple', *The Gazette*, 21 June 2003

- , 'Response by Charlie Mayfield', *The Gazette*, 12 June 2009, section Gazette letters
- , 'Response by D.A. Stevens to "Saturday Workers" by An Under-Appreciated Partner', *The Gazette*, 13 August 1988, section Readers' Letters
- , 'Response by I D Alexander to "Equal Opportunities" by Black but Comely', *The Gazette*, 18 June 1994, section Readers' letters
- , 'Response by I D Alexander to "Partnership Democracy" by Right Winger', *The Gazette*, 19 October 1996, section Readers' letters
- , 'Response by J R Card to "Year of the Disabled" by Seamus Fielding', *The Gazette*, 24 January 1981, section Readers' letters
- , 'Response by O.B.M to "Hours of Work" by Wistfull', *The Gazette*, 6 June 1964, section Readers' letters
- , 'Response by Peter Lewis to "Business Principles" by C A M', *The Gazette*, 29 May 1976, section Readers' letters
- , 'Response by S M Masterman to "Partnership Subsidy" by Sir John Falstaff', *The Gazette*, 1 April 1995, section Readers' letters
- , 'Response by Stuart Hampson to "Morale" by Downhearted', *The Gazette*, 8 February 2003, section Readers' Letters
- , 'Response by T G Andrews, Director of Personnel to Da Mihi Plus', *The Gazette*, 1 February 1975, section Readers' letters
- , 'Response by T G Andrews to "Helping Disabled Young People" by Able', *The Gazette*, 18 June 1977, section Readers' letters
- , 'Response by T G Andrews to "Segregation in Dining-Rooms" by Unsigned', *The Gazette*, 25 December 1971, section Readers' letters
- , 'Response by Tracey Killen to "Outsourcing" by Anon', *The Gazette*, 2 July 2014, section Gazette letters
- , 'Response by W L R E Gilchrist to "Disabled" by Douglas B', *The Gazette*, 11 July 1981, section Readers' letters
- , 'Reviewing the Constitution', *The Gazette*, 16 January 1999
- , 'Sale of a Branch', *The Gazette*, 8 January 1949
- , 'Sale of Branch', *The Gazette*, 11 December 1948
- , 'Serving Partners' Leisure Needs', *The Gazette*, 16 June 2001

- , 'Shopping Evenings for Disabled and Aged Customers', *The Gazette*, 17 August 1968
- , 'Something to Offer Each Other', *The Gazette*, 14 May 1994
- , 'Stead McAlpin', *The Gazette*, 5 January 1974
- , 'Stead McAlpin & Co Ltd', *The Gazette*, 25 December 1965
- , 'Subsidies for Clubs and Societies and for Adult Education', *The Gazette*, 12 June 1993
- , 'Summary of Events Compiled by Mr Henry for Councillors and Partners on the Industrial Dispute at Speke', 1975, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, 2532/k Industrial Disputes
- , 'Summary of Points Made at the 1972 Conference of Branch Council Presidents and Clerks at Odney', 1971, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 2060 xviii
- , 'Summary of Proceedings on 7 February, Part 1', *The Gazette*, 19 February 1994
- , 'Summary of Proceedings on 17 November, Part 2', *The Gazette*, 6 December 1997
- , 'Summary of Proceedings on 20 November, Part 2', *The Gazette*, 9 December 2000
- , 'Summary of Proceedings on 21 September, Part 2', *The Gazette*, 10 October 1998
- , 'Summary of Proceedings on 23 November, Part 2', *The Gazette*, 12 December 1992
- , 'Summary of Proceedings on 26 March, Part 2', *The Gazette*, 14 April 2001
- , 'Summary of Proceedings on 28 March', *The Gazette*, 16 April 1988
- , 'Summary of Proceedings on Monday 6 February', *The Gazette*, 18 February 1989
- , 'Summary of Proceedings, Part 2', *The Gazette*, 20 July 1996
- , 'Sunday Trading', *The Gazette*, 6 November 1982
- , 'The Central Council Dinner', *The Gazette*, 24 November 1973
- , 'The Central Council Dinner', *The Gazette*, 23 November 1968

- , ‘The Central Council Meeting’, *The Gazette*, 18 February 1978
- , ‘The Central Council Meeting: Summary of Proceedings on Monday 14th October 1968’, *The Gazette*, 26 October 1968
- , ‘The Central Council Meeting: Summary of the Proceedings on Monday the 13th January’, *The Gazette*, 25 January 1964
- , ‘The Chainman Answers Councillors’ Questions’, *The Gazette*, 6 June 1998
- , ‘The Chairman Answers Councillors’ Questions’, *The Gazette*, 27 May 1989
- , ‘The Claims Committee’, *The John Lewis Partnership*, 6 March 1926
- , *The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership 1965* (John Lewis and Company Limited, 1965)
- , ‘The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership April 1999 Draft’, *The Gazette*, 24 April 1999
- , ‘The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership, August 1999 Revised Draft (Supplement)’, *The Gazette*, 21 August 1999
- , ‘The Constitution of the John Lewis Partnership: Preamble, Principles and Rules: Draft (Supplement)’, *The Gazette*, 24 April 1999
- , ‘The Debate on the Chairman’s Address’, *The Gazette*, 4 June 1966, 457
- , ‘The Debate on the Chairman’s Report’, *The Gazette*, 20 May 1972
- , ‘The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act, 1944’, *The Gazette*, 28 September 1946
- , ‘The Golden Jubilee Trust: Making a Difference (Supplement)’, *The Gazette*, 9 June 2001
- , ‘The John Lewis Partnership’, *The Gazette (Jubilee Issue)*, 13 June 1964
- , ‘The John Lewis Partnership’, *The Gazette*, 4 January 1964
- , ‘The Leisure Roadshow’, *The Gazette*, 11 June 1994
- , ‘The Odney Club Report’, *The Gazette*, 8 October 1977
- , ‘The Partnership Research Project’, *The Gazette*, 27 October 1962
- , ‘The Partnership’s Golden Jubilee’, *The Gazette*, 3 October 1998

- , 'The Partnership's Policy in the Employment of Coloured Workers', 1961, The John Lewis Partnership Archive, Box 2524(a)
- , 'The Sailing Club', *The Gazette*, 18 April 1964
- , 'Theatre Tickets', *The Gazette*, 1 February 1964
- , 'Ticket Operators Wanted', *The Gazette*, 20 September 1969
- , 'To My Fellow-Employees of Peter Jones, Ltd.', *The Gazette*, 16 March 1918
- , 'Transport Partners at Speke, the Service Building for George Henry Lee', *The Gazette*, 2 August 1975
- , 'Useful Discussions', *The Gazette*, 10 May 1975
- , 'Welcome Break Welcomes Waitrose', *The Gazette*, 3 April 2009
- , 'What Does the Partnership Council Mean to You?', *The Gazette*, 4 January 2003
- , 'Wildlife Conservation', *The Gazette*, 24 August 1985
- , 'Work: The Partnership and the Trade Unions', *The Gazette*, 25 February 1939
- , *The Gazette*, 16 March 1918
- , *The Gazette*, 28 February 1976
- , *The Gazette*, 5 September 1987
- , *The Gazette*, 11 January 1964, 1222
- , *The Gazette*, 25 May 1985
- , *The Gazette*, 16 March 2018, 34
- , *The Gazette*, 1 February 1997, section Readers' letters

The Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000, 2000 <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2000/1551/>> [accessed 5 October 2022]

Thomas, Carol, 'Disability: Prospects for Social Inclusion', in *Fighting Poverty, Inequality and Injustice*, ed. by Alan Walker, Adrian Sinfield, and Carol Walker (Bristol University Press, 2011), pp. 223–40

Thomas, Daniel, 'What Went Wrong at Debenhams?', *BBC News*, 1 December 2020 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-55144922>> [accessed 25 March 2024]

- Thomas, Daniel, Jemma Dempsey, and Lucy Hooker, 'John Lewis Will Always Be Open by Staff, Says Boss', *BBC News*, 10 May 2023
<<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-65520696>> [accessed 25 March 2024]
- Thornton, Patricia, and Neil Lunt, *Employment for Disabled People: Social Obligation or Individual Responsibility?* (Social Policy Research Unit, 1995), ii
<<https://pure.york.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/employment-for-disabled-people-social-obligation-or-individual-re>>
- Thorpe, Andrew, 'The Labour Party and Trade Unions', in *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism?: Trade Unions and Industrial Politics*, ed. by John McIlroy, Nina Fishman, and Alan Campbell (Merlin, 2007), pp. 93–132
- Tisdall, Patricia, 'Giving Disabled a Fair Share of the Jobs', *The Times* (7 July 1980), 60670 edition
- Tomlinson, Jim, 'Thatcher, Monetarism and the Politics of Inflation', in *Making Thatcher's Britain*, ed. by Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders, Online (Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 62–77
- 'Two Ticks for Commitment to the Disabled', *St Michael News*, February 1997
- Tyler, Richard, "'Victims of Our History?" Barbara Castle and In Place of Strife', *Contemporary British History*, 20.3 (2006), pp. 461–76
- UN Enable, 'The International Year of Disabled Persons 1981', 2003
<<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disidydp.htm#:~:text=In%201976%2C%20the%20General%20Assembly,rehabilitation%20and%20prevention%20of%20disabilities>> [accessed 10 November 2023]
- Underhill, William, 'Firms Blame Reluctance by Job-Seekers', *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 December 1994
- Unilever Archives, 'Historic Considerations of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion', *Collaborative Projects*, 2022 <<https://www.archives-unilever.com/get-involved/collaborative-projects>> [accessed 21 September 2023]
- United Kingdom Parliament, *Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970*, C44
<<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1970/44/crossheading/premises-open-to-public/enacted>> [accessed 16 May 2023]
- , *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*, C50
<<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/50/enacted>>
- , *Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944*, C10
<<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/7-8/10/enacted#:~:text=An%20Act%20to%20make%20further,%5B1st%20March%201944.%5D>> [accessed 16 May 2023]

- United Nations, 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)', 2007 <<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-1-purpose.html#:~:text=Persons%20with%20disabilities%20include%20those,Next%3A%20Article%20%20%E2%80%93%20Definitions>> [accessed 5 September 2023]
- United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons', 1975 <<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/res3447.pdf>> [accessed 10 November 2023]
- Ussishkin, Daniel, 'Morale and the Postwar Politics of Consensus', *Journal of British Studies*, 52.3 (2013), pp. 722–43
- Weatherburn, Michael, 'Human Relations' Invented Traditions: Sociotechnical Research and Worker Motivation at the Interwar Rowntree Cocoa Works', *Human Relations*, 73.7 (2020), pp. 899–923
- White, Sara, 'Crippling the Archives: Negotiating Notions of Disability in Appraisal and Arrangement and Description', *The American Archivist*, 75.1 (2012), pp. 109–24
- Wilenski, A. H., 'A Partnership Art Club', *The Gazette of the John Lewis Partnership*, 25 November 1933
- Williamson, Adrian, 'The Bullock Report on Industrial Democracy and the Post-War Consensus', *Contemporary British History*, 30.1 (2016), pp. 119–49
- Wilson, Dolly Smith, 'A New Look at the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Post-War Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 17.2 (2006), pp. 206–29
- Wilson, John F., Ian G. Jones, Steven Toms, Anna Tilba, Emily Buchnea, and Nicholas Wong, *Business History: A Research Overview* (Routledge, 2022)
- Windel, Aaron, 'Co-Operatives and Technocrats, or "the Fabian Agony" Revisited', in *Brave New World: Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building in Britain Between the Wars*, ed. by Laura Beers and Geraint Thomas (Institute of Historical Studies, 2011)
- Wintour, Patrick, 'Nick Clegg Pushes "John Lewis"-Style Economy"', *The Guardian*, 15 January 2012 <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/jan/15/nick-clegg-john-lewis-economy>> [accessed 6 February 2024]
- Wood, Zoe, 'Richer Sounds Founder Hands over Control of Hi-Fi and TV Firm to Staff', *The Guardian*, 14 May 2019 <<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/may/14/richer-sounds-staff-julian-richer>> [accessed 25 March 2024]

Woodward, Joan, *The Saleswoman: A Study of Attitudes and Behaviour in Retail Distribution* (Pitman, 1960)

Wrigley, Chris, *British Trade Unions since 1933* (Cambridge University Press, 2002)

———, 'Trade Unions, Strikes and the Government', in *Britain in the 1970s*, ed. by Richard Coopey and Nicholas Woodward (UCL Press, 1996), pp. 273–92

Wrigley, Neil, Cliff Guy, and Richard Dunn, 'Sunday and Late-Night Shopping in a British City: Evidence from the Cardiff Consumer Panel', *Area*, 16.3 (1984), pp. 236–40

'You Can Do All Sorts of Things', *Sainsbury Journal*, October 2008

Yow, Valerie, 'Interviewing Techniques and Strategies', in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by Alistair Thomson and Robert Perks, 3rd edn (Routledge, 2015)

Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Ina, 'Living Standards and Consumption', in *A Companion to Contemporary Britain*, ed. by Paul Addison and Harriet Jones (Wiley-Blackwell, 2005)