Red Warwick versus Warwick University Plc: The Political Economy of Higher Education and Student Protest

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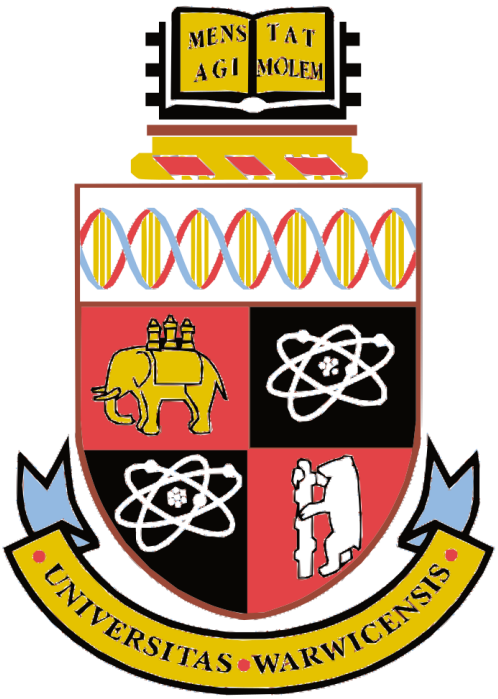

The University of Warwick

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Abstract

This thesis, situated in the tradition of 'militant research' (Russell, 2015: 223-4), is an attempt to uncover historical lessons for radical activism at the University of Warwick, covering three periods: 1967-75, 1979-85, and 2008-17. Three primary dialectics are examined within each period: the relation between the wider political culture and campus activism, how activists related to the Students' Union, and how Warwick's management responded to student militants. All three dialectics are situated within a wider national context. The thesis contributes to understanding how wider social and political changes in British post-WWII history – late 1960s social movements, the rise of neo-liberalism and the global financial crisis – manifested and were contested on a micro-scale. The research uncovers the relation between wider working class struggle and student protest, the gradual neutering of Warwick SU under neo-liberalism, and the extensive range of tactics management has deployed against activists. The paper also provides a case study of the neo-liberalisation of British higher education.

Abbreviations:

CVCP: Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals

FFW: Fossil Free Warwick University

IAS: Institute for Advanced Studies

IS: International Socialists

MRC: Modern Records Centre

NUS: National Union of Students

PPU: Protect the Public University Warwick

RSSF: Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation [national]

SWSO: Socialist Workers Student Organisation

UGM: Union General Meeting

WCA: University of Warwick Conservative Association

WFFE: Warwick For Free Education

WooW: Weapons out of Warwick

WSU: Warwick Students' Union

I. Introduction

This thesis is an examination of 'two contrasting trends in Warwick's history' (Hailwood, 2009). One, branded 'Warwick University Ltd.' by E.P. Thompson (2013), follows the corporate entity of 'The University of Warwick': its management, its brand, its close links with business. The other, a tendency from below, has sometimes been termed 'Red Warwick': politically radical in aims and methods, comprising a varying section of the student population in tandem with academic and manual staff, often pushing back against corporate influence on and modes of operation by Warwick University Ltd.

This thesis explores three dialectics present across three periods of Warwick's history:

1. **The interplay between on-campus activism and wider political struggle**: how political contestation, social movements and class struggle have influenced and stoked campus radicalism, and vice versa.
2. **The relation between Warwick Students' Union (WSU) and campus activism**: how WSU has supported or rejected campus activists over the years, how militants have approached WSU, and the wider struggles at Warwick and nationally over the role, legally and politically, of SUs.
3. **The direct university 'class struggle'**: between students, lower-level academics and manual staff on the one hand, and upper faculty and university management on the other. This empirical work is situated within the theoretical framework of the university's conflictual structure – and its relation to the wider forces of the state and capital – I put forward elsewhere (Woodman, 2016a).

'Activism' or 'protest' ranges from direct action to political organisation, community building to intervening in national politics. I include the most immediate social reproductive fights over rents and grants, students' union autonomy battles, and wider

anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles, focusing on role of far-left groups. I include both student protest and other forms of worker struggle on campus, focusing on the former. The form of campus activism, its political orientation, its success among the student population, the forms of management repression and the character of WSU will all be placed within the national picture of political dynamics and regulatory change.

Chapter II details the dissertation's methodology and sourcing, limitations in the research process, and pitfalls in the current body of institutional history about Warwick. Chapter III examines the three dialectics during the height of political activity on campus, from 1967-1975, when student and working class movements were on the offensive worldwide. Chapter IV covers 1979-85, when Thatcherism ramped up the assault against SUs, the student body began to shift right, and the far-right started organising on campus. Chapter V takes up 2008-17, and the struggles of the alter-globalisation-influenced libertarian activist community fighting against neo-liberalism in higher education and wider off-campus injustices. Each chapter begins with an introduction to the key context, events and groups from the period, followed by three sections which correspond roughly to the three dialectics above.

The source base is comprised of oral histories, archival documents and secondary literature, and includes a wider span of voices and periods than *Warwick University Ltd.*, notably through the use of oral histories. As such, it is a major contribution to a broader understanding of the dynamics of change, repression and resistance at Warwick. The thesis also provides a detailed case study of how wider political dynamics in Britain's post-WWII history – the late 1960s social movements, the rise of Thatcherism and the Global Financial Crisis – manifested and were contested on a micro-scale. Finally, Warwick is an enlightening case study of the marketisation and neo-liberalisation of higher education, a

testing ground for the melding of the corporate and university spheres, and the concomitant resistance to that process.

II. Methodology

This paper draws on the tradition of 'militant research', defined by Russell (2015: 223-4) as 'a combination of thought and action orientated towards understanding and changing collective praxis', an attempt to overcome the 'the problematic of activism/academia'. All knowledge is 'the production of a very specific and orientated knowledge' (ibid: 224); to present one particular constellation from history's vast tapestry of facts involves normative and political decisions. This work is situated on the side of struggle from below, committed to recording, analysing and contributing to the activist bloc at the University of Warwick. For the 2012-2017 period I was a 'participant-observer', being 'involved in the activities of the movement/s' (Macleod, 2015: 44). The relationships and perspectives a researcher can access through this method allowed me to find out things one 'would never have otherwise known using more detached, less applied social science methods' (ibid: 40).

Oral histories

Interviews with ten individuals were carried out; the Institute for Advanced Studies' (IAS) 'Voices of the University' project for the 50th anniversary, replete with over 250 interviews, was also consulted. Oral histories are useful for delving into the details which documents neglect. They also often 'emerge in response to a unique challenge faced by universities due to their largely transitory members' (Huxford & Wallace, 2017: 85), and can provide a 'challenge to the established account' by letting the voices of those without control over institutional history writing or archival documents voice their experiences (Thompson, 2016: 36).

This potentially liberatory aspect has limitations. Interviewees are 'more likely to be composed from [a community's] central groups' (ibid: 38); the voices in this thesis are

predominately white and male, and tracking down former sabbatical officers was far easier than radical activists. I was also able to carry out only one interview for 1979-85 period, leaving an asymmetry in the treatment across time.

The IAS interviews are also a limited source. When re-using qualitative data, a researcher can find 'one's own specific theoretical interests or research questions are negated' (Gallwey, 2011: 23). The IAS interviews are more concerned with recording a general picture of the participants' memories of Warwick, rather than zooming in on activism and political conflict. These interviews remain useful, and the presence of a number of management perspectives supplements the lack of original interviews of members of management. Overall, the IAS project 'forms part of officially-sanctioned history writing […] yet it also represents a space for individuals to tell very different stories of the institution that challenge official narratives' (Huxford & Wallace, 2017: 80).

Archival sources

Documents come primarily from the Modern Records Centre (MRC) and WSU archives. Both have materials spanning the entirety of the periods covered: student publications like *Campus* and the *Boar*, leaflets and pamphlets, minutes of Union General Meetings (UGMs) and activist groups etc. The MRC's materials from activist groups are concentrated around 1970, and there are numerous collections from active academics. There is a curious lack of management records in the MRC: occassionally legal briefings and memos exist, but large periods of political conflict garner virtually no written records from management's side. This management opacity has been reflected elsewhere: Warwick was the only university to refuse Esmee Hanna access to sensitive archives for her 2013 book *Student Power*. WSU archive possesses original materials spanning a wider time-period. Both archives lack materials from the final period, primarily because activist publications have been increasingly placed online. Online records of publications like

Dissident Warwick and the blogs of groups like Protect the Public University Warwick (PPU) are consulted for the final period.

Campus, the student paper of the late 1960s and early 1970s, 'operated on the assumption that people know what is going on before it is published' (Campus, 1973b), meaning that events, individuals and contexts are not always fully explored in the paper. *Campus* and the *Boar* both reflect, to an extent, the vagaries of the political opinions of their particular editors (Browne, 2016). Editors tended to tack to a centrist or broad-left line, although discussion of activists and the far-left can be gleaned through factual reporting and letters pages.

Secondary literature

As Huxford and Wallace (2017: 79) note, 'For many, the institutional history of the University of Warwick begins and ends with E.P. Thompson's critiques' in *Warwick University Ltd.* (2013). Alternative book-length treatements tend to come from management's side: Shattock (1991; 2015), Rees (1989) and Hall (undated), all men in senior management or engaged in the founding of the University. The University's 50th anniversary celebrations took place in 2015, offering a largely missed opportunity to explore past moments and repeated dynamics of conflict between University management, staff and students.

Treatments of the University's history have tended to fall into three narrative obfuscations: silence, appropriation, and demonisation.

Silence operates, as Trouillot (1995) explicated, at various stages in the 'production of history', where certain events, facts or classes of people are erased and distorted by those with control over the production process. Shattock's (2015) 138-pages on 'the University of Warwick and its community after 50 years' contain only two

mentions of student protest, both regarding the 1970 'troubles', both a sentence apiece – despite the fact that Shattock was a key player in a series of later disputes at the University (Shattock, 2012-2013).

Appropriation operates when institutions and power centres claim a past history of struggle as their own, defanging the threat it once posed to power. Former Vice-Chancellor Brian Follett, discussing an occupation of Senate House under his reign in the 1990s, claims that, 'The university paid to ship in large amounts of pizzas and beer […] I thought that was great; I loved that evening, that was terrific fun'. Such claims work to appropriate the conflict for the legacy of the powerful, reducing political contention to harmonious 'fun'. Follett's claims were challenged by a student participant in the occupation at an IAS event in 2016.

Demonisation is a classic tactic designed to discredit protesters and the memory of their struggles. Shattock, for instance, describes the 1970 sit-in: 'the new president […] said, Mike, I wouldn't go in there […] they'll rough you up. You know it was violent […] there were revolutionaries from all over the place' (Shattock, 2012-2013).

This thesis seeks to redress these pitfalls, through creating a narrative which covers a broad swathe of Warwick's history, examining events and conflicts ignored or obscured in official institutional history, and analysing the interplay between and complexities of management, students, academics, and the national setting. It is situated in the tradition of Schwartz's (2011) and Adams' (1996) histories of two Oxford colleges, recapturing the social history of student radicals, striking cleaners and dissident academics. As such, it is something of an attempt to extend and improve the approach of *Warwick University Ltd.* for a wider arc of the University's history.

III. 1967-1975: 'The high noon of rabid Warwick militancy'[1]

1967-75 was a period of large-scale student and worker unrest across the Global North (Fraser, 1988). The UK saw a fairly substantial student movement take root, with the Radical Student Alliance mobilising an estimated 100,000 British students in 1967 (Hoefferle, 2013: 70), and occupations and unrest erupting at the LSE, Essex and elsewhere (Hanna, 2013). Unrest at Warwick only erupted during the 1970 Files Affair; indeed, there had been 'little action on campus' prior to 1967/8 (Thompson, 2013: 43), and *Campus,* the student paper, declared Warwick 'dead' in May 1968, during the events in France. Following an immediate lull in activity after 1970, there was a major service worker strike on campus in 1973, another occupation over the Union building issue in 1974, and a four-month rent strike and near-month-long occupation of Senate House over accomodation prices in 1975.

During this period Warwick, in-line with the British student movement in general, would rarely 'escape the shadow of the far-left groups' (Fraser, 1988: 144); aside from the short-lived Radical Student Alliance and Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation (RSSF), Britain lacked any New Left equivilent of the West German and U.S. SDSs. At Warwick, as elsewhere, the Socialist Society would often be the radical flank to the left of the SU. These SocSocs tended to have one or more large internal factions aligned to a wider socialist organisation; in Warwick's case, the International Socialists (IS). Identity-based and single-issue campaign groups were forming at Warwick – women's liberation, the Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Greece, and Third World First – but

[1] (Chatterbox, 1979: 16)

were generally marginal in comparison to later years. The right-wing opposition was concentrated in Warwick Conservative Association (WCA).

III(a). 'The spirit of the times': campus struggle, class struggle

The role of wider mobilisations in the UK and internationally in stoking struggle on campus cannot be underplayed. There were two key ways wider class struggle interacted with campus activity: through the political education of a hard-core of far-left activists, and through the creation of a generally leftist political culture, fertile ground for organising amongst the student population.

Far-left activists

Far-left activists, like those in IS, were often influenced by the world of struggle which existed around them before they even reached university. Communist Party parents, a Labour Party embedded in local communities, and experience in the CND Youth in the early 1960s set a range of activists up to organise on campus following the huge expansion of British higher education after the 1963 Robbins Report (Hoefferle, 2013: 55-6). Professor James Hinton, a key academic activist at Warwick during the period, would later say that CND and the bomb 'started me off' on the left (quoted in Hughes, 2014: 75). Paul Smith (2017), one of the founders of the Socialist Society at Warwick in 1966 and a member of Coventry IS, relates how his politics were heavily impacted by witnessing the end of the National Union of Seamen's strike in Liverpool in 1966: 'I went to a mass meeting and I'd never seen a mass meeting before in my life […] a collective of workers'.

It was not uncommon for students to attend picket lines in the local Coventry area: in the summer of 1968, students joined pickets at the Coventry Montgomery Plating plant, where Asian workers were striking. In November, 70 Indian workers at the Mothers Pride

Bakery went on a wildcat strike, leading to victimisation of many striking staff (Campus, 1968b). On November 30, buses left from the Rootes Building for a 60-strong picket which was broken up by police in an event which became 'notorious' on campus (Smith, 2017). On the Coventry picket lines, the self-reinforcing interplay between campus activists and extra-university struggle was most visceral. The radical activists attempted to solidify connections between students and the external working class, forming a short-lived Worker-Student Action Committee in February 1969 (Raby, 1969), and eagerly helping organise 'open university' weeks outside of term time (Campus, 1969), when the local community was invited to descend on campus for political talks and discussions.

International issues also played a role in radicalising activists. Vietnam was 'the over-arching motif of mobilization in the advanced West' (Fraser, 1988: 89); as Smith (2017) put it, 'you can't underestimate' the impact of the War: 'it was just massive'. At Warwick, the first demonstration on campus was organised against the presence of the U.S. Ambassador on October 4, 1967, during the opening of the Benefactors residences (Campus, 1967). U.S. exchange students staged a lecture boycott (Anonymous, 1967), and played a role in bringing the issue of Vietnam to Warwick students (Smith, 2017).

Wider mobilisations manifested in small ways in the consciousness of campus activists: 'Le Chienlit, c'est J.B [Jack Butterworth, the first Vice Chancellor]', a reference to the May 1968 events in France, was daubed on the walls of the University that year (Thompson, 2013: 44). As Ivor Gaber, a member of the Socialist Society, puts it: 'we were influenced by events in France, events in Berkley […] and at LSE' (Gaber, 2013).

Political culture

The general political common sense of campus tended to be more left-wing than it would be in later years, providing more fertile ground for radical activists. The 'baby boomers' had a sense of entitlement fostered by the post-WWII welfare state, a failed parental

generation wracked by war, continued social authoritarianism, and contradictions between their society's professed aims and their government's actions overseas (DeGroot, 2008: 14). The development of youth culture and identity coalesced around anti-authoritarian ideals, in rebellion against the establishment.

There was a general 'sense of a world in turmoil', as Sabby Sagall, a Jewish second-generation migrant put it (Hughes, 2014: 70), and 'a sense of excitement, that things were possible, that you could change things' (Smith, 2017): something that would begin to be lost under Thatcher.

At Warwick, for example, *Campus* could comfortably run an article from the president of the Liberal Society in 1968 discussing the prospects for revolution in Britain (Fisher, 1968). The article concluded that revolution was not possible – but the fact that even the political centre felt the need to discuss the question is indicative. Such trends were mirrored nationally: in 1968, the National League of Young Liberals was involved in writing a strike guide for secondary school children (Boyd, 1968). In fact, *Campus* is a good measure of the general political culture – it tended to reflect the broader, and more moderate, sentiments of the student body, rarely hosting or being controlled by the radical left. In this period, a commitment to struggle against the University, acceptance of the legitimacy of direct action, and discussion of wider political issues was a standard feature of the publication. As Smith (2017) says, there was something of a political 'continuum until you got to the Conservatives' – and even then, WCA released a statement during the Files Affair affirming the 'grave importance' of the political surveillance files uncovered and calling for an independent inquiry (WCA, 1970). Despite this, a UGM – at a time when general meetings were generally well-attended – passed a motion declaring that the Union 'could not care bloody less about the stupid antics of the Conservative Association' (WSU, 1970), indicating how isolated and on the back-foot the right were.

Cries of 'apathy' have been a feature of Warwick's political life since the foundation of the University, but the bench-mark for apathy has changed drastically. In 1971, mobilising over 100 students for a march to Coventry in support of West German student leader Rudi Dutschke – who had been deported from the UK – was labelled 'paltry' and 'miserable' in *Campus*, a demonstration of 'pathetic apathy' (Various, 1971; Campus, 1971). Fast forward to the 2000s, and a campus demo of 100 would be considered a success, despite a much larger student population.

III(b). An ambivalent vehicle: WSU and radical activism

In the late 1960s, the Socialist Society made a sharp delineation between WSU's executive and UGMs. They boycotted the 'sham' WSU elections – which they felt failed to concentrate on properly political issues or to allow the possibility of struggle against the University – and called for concentrating 'our activities on getting all power for the U.G.M' (Socialist Society, c.1968). This struggle for sovereignty between the executive and the democratic assembly would re-emerge throughout Warwick's history, with activists usually agitating on the side of the latter. Throughout the period, sabbatical officers tended to be drawn from the centre and centre-left.

The UGM was, however, largely sovereign, and its decisions binding on the executive. The ability to argue their case and undermine common-sense assumptions in a collective environment gave radical activists a powerful arena within which to operate. Crucially, nearly all activism which focused on campus issues – rents, the struggle for a union building, food prices – was carried out through the SU. The UGM was the decision-making body when it came to direct action. The two occupations of 1970, for example, were voted for by the UGM, and at the end of the meeting students immediately occupied. Every stage of the 1975 rent strike was debated and decided within the UGM, from the initial rent strike decision in January 1974 (Campus, 1974b), to the 3.5-week

occupation of Senate House in April-May 1975. This tactic was overwhelmingly affirmed at a UGM on April 23 attended by over 1,200 students – demonstrating the wide-spread legitimacy of direct action at the time.

The Socialist Society had, as other activist groups would, a slightly ambivalent relationship with the 'bread-and-butter' issues which garnered the highest levels of political engagement with the SU. Ellis argues that, 'Vietnam did not […] inspire most British activism; internal university issues did' (Ellis, 1998: 56). This is generally true for those moments of large-scale student involvement – but the militant activists who did a lot of the heavy-lifting, and sustained activity during lulls, were not necessarily motivated primarily by 'internal university issues'. For some activists, particularly Trotskyist groups like IS, 'it was not students as such but the working class which was the agent of revolutionary change' (Fraser, 1988: 136). The orientation of Coventry IS, Smith (2017) explains, 'would not be on the universities […] the universities were part and parcel of a broader perspective'. Students were to be mobilised to support the working class or anti-imperialist forces internationally, often against the resistance of the centrist sabbatical officers who, as WSU President in 1970/1 puts it, were concerned more with the 'philosophical concept of students running their own environment' (Fitzgerald, 2014). As such, activists would often focus on British activities in Ireland, the 1973 coup in Chile,[2] or mobilising for local picket lines. Coventry IS noted internally that student issues 'give one no more than a platform for continual propaganda on the relationship between the problems of students and those of others, particularly the working class, under capitalism – but in order to be able to credibly put forward such ideas we have to be seen to be involved' (Cowley, 1972). Due to this strategic orientation towards working class

[2] Around 100 Warwick students attended a London demonstration against Pinochet's junta on May 5, 1974 (Campus, 1974a).

struggles, radical groups took the lead during the week-long 1973 service workers strike over pay (Campus, 1973a).

Following national trends – the National Union of Students (NUS) eliminated its 'no politics' clause in April 1969 and began taking stances on wider political questions (Day, 2014) – WSU began to take positions on issues beyond the confines of campus. On October 28, 1968, a 'crucial point in the history of the Union' occurred when a motion to support a proposed Engineering Union's strike was debated (Campus, 1968a). Although defeated, it marked the start of a swathe of motions committing the Union to radical actions on wider issues. In March 1972, the UGM voted to send ten Warwick students to an 'illegal civil rights march in Ulster' (Campus, 1972). Whilst the right organised and argued against these moves in similar fashion to the years ahead, resistance to this politicisation of the Union was minimal until Thatcher.

III(c). The establishment spooked: management respond

Ruling power centres world-wide were shaken by the growing radicalism of the late 1960s. Students and the New Left in the U.S. were hit by the FBI's COINTELPRO, designed to 'expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralise' – in the words of FBI director J Edgar Hoover – political threats to the state (Perkus, 1975: 102). Demonstrating students were shot dead in the U.S., Mexico, the Philippines and elsewhere. In the UK, a 1968 Foreign Office report described British student militants as 'frighteningly radical', and considered 'the threat to the west presented by student protest' as 'potentially dangerous' (Travis, 2000). Members of the British establishment like Conrad Dixon, Special Branch chief inspector, warned of a 'climate of opinion amongst extreme left-wing elements' who seek 'active confrontation with the authorities to attempt to force social changes' (Dixon, 1968). Dixon founded, with central government assistance, the Special Demonstration Squad, an undercover Metropolitan Police unit tasked with long-

term infiltration of activist groups to combat a 'very real risk to the established order' (Evans & Lewis, 2013: 10). In 2017, it was revealed that an undercover police officer had spied on the RSSF in the late 1960s (Evans, 2017). An entire Cabinet committee on overseas students managed spying operations against internationals across the UK (Lee, 1998: 313).

University administrations were similarly unsettled. The Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), managements' primary coordinating body, commissioned several reports and documents on student unrest in this period (CVCP, 1969-1982). On June 1968, the CVCP held a two-day conference to discuss the heightened student unrest facing universities. A report from the conference contained many of the key analyses and strategic recommendations that would recur over time. The conference noted the 'crucial influence of a small number of staff' who needed to be dealt with, and argued for rigidly refusing to engage with any groups other than 'the properly elected representatives of the students' (CVCP, 1968). The Committee also noted the 'advantage in having the police around frequently on the University site encouraging them and their cars to be here from time to time so that undergraduates become accustomed to their presence' (ibid). Legal advice for the CVCP a month later argued that injunctions were 'likely to be the only remedy where students seize a university building and barricade themselves into it' (Gray's Inn Chambers, 1968: 6).

Warwick's management was taking note. As early as 1967, before serious political activity on campus commenced, managers and senior academics were discussing articles on 'Student Power' published in *New Left Review* (Ford, 1967), examining the possible range of grievances 'socialist students' might be able to 'exploit' to generate unrest. The Finance Officer (1967) privately identified the early socialist society as being behind a canteen boycott in October 1967. A note to the Vice-Chancellor in January 1969 argues

that it would 'wise to prepare against student activism as long-term phenomena' (Unsigned, 1969), and Butterworth discussed the 'growing student menace' with other Vice Chancellors (printed in Thompson, 2013: 120). One, from Manchester, sought advice from Butterworth on his plans to 'evoke either the civil or the criminal law […] which will keep dissident members of staff quiet' (Cooper, 1968).

So concerned was Warwick's management, that they began to take pre-emptive measures. In October 1968, Butterworth wrote to all members of Council proposing a change in disciplinary regulations, arguing that there was a need for a 'method of dealing with an emergency situation within the University caused by student disorder should that arise' (Butterworth, 1968). The 'axis that the University feared the most was that between the students and a significant portion of the academic staff' (Fitzgerald, 2016). As such, management sought 'legal advice about tenure of staff under the University statutes' in order to pave the way for dismissing the 'real difficulty' in a 'moment of crisis': 'the staff who assist, advise, and indeed sometimes direct the activities of the extreme student group' (printed in Thompson, 2013: 121). The 'legal advice', sent to the University in August 1968, argued for a change in the statutes in order to make firing unruly staff easier. 'Academic freedom is rightly prized', the advice argued, 'but I would have thought the desire to uphold the good name of the University would have overridden other considerations' (Linklaters & Pains, 1968: 5). The corporate brand image of the University was already being placed above the interests of academic and political freedom at this early stage. Such a focus on student-staff solidarity was not strategically unsound for management: members of the Socialist Society would go to E.P. Thompson's house every Friday to discuss politics and socialise, for example (Winslow, 2014).

As was revealed in files uncovered by students during the February 11, 1970 occupation, political surveillance at Warwick in the late 1960s had become quite extensive,

and business and University interests were melding. Butterworth was personally receiving reports about the activities of the RSSF from the Economic League via Sir Arnold Hall, an industrialist on Warwick's Council (Hall, 1968). The Economic League was a right-wing private surveillance outfit organised in the 1920s to 'attempt systematic, national monitoring and labour blacklisting of individuals for their alleged left-wing political beliefs' (Lubbers, 2012: 35). A politically-active applicant to the University was rejected at the personal request of Butterworth (Thompson, 2013: 111). Industrialists who sat on the University Council were placing spies in local union meetings addressed by Warwick academics (ibid: 107). One, David Montgomery, a visiting academic from the U.S., was subject to legal discussions over whether he could be deported under the WW1-era Aliens Restriction Act for subjecting students to 'undesirable indoctrination' due to his 'bias against employers' (printed in Thompson, 2013: 108). The student authors of an article in *Giblet* about the alleged CIA connections of the Fund for International Student Cooperation – of which Butterworth was a trustee – were investigated, with Butterworth copied in (Bradshaw, 2003: 19). Several students who handed out an anti-authoritarian leaflet at a local school were the subject of a ream of correspondence stretching from the University Council to the Warwickshire County Council, the local Tory MP, and Enoch Powell (Smith, 1969).

Following the 1970 events, Warwick began to prepare for future unrest. As Shattock would state years later, 'we learnt from it all' (Workshop, 2003). The Chancellor, Lord Radcliffe, was instituted at the head of an inquiry into the political files issue. Radcliffe issued a report which largely whitewashed the University, as expected at the time (Gaber, 2013). Professor Ford was tasked with looking at the University's disciplinary mechanisms, concluding that, 'Identification is critical for the operation of a disciplinary system', but that the lack of a 'university security force with keen memories' posed a difficulty to these efforts to 'deal effectively with collective protests' (Ford, 1970).

Ominously, Ford noted that 'we should make no mistake that further disorders will eventually lead to the imposition of discipline from outside'. Management felt that there was implicit pressure from the state to keep student unrest within bounds. The creation of a University warden was floated shortly after the Files Affair, to 'assist the Vice Chancellor in the maintenance and promotion of good order in the University', although pushed back (Campus, 1970).

Ultimately, as Hoefferle (2013: 5) notes, there was a dynamic interaction between repression and resistance which was exploited by the radicals: 'most students were politically apathetic and did not regularly take part in protests. A small minority of British-born student activists, however, did gain the support of the majority of students by provoking the authorities to over-react'. This pattern was particularly on show at Warwick during the 1970 Files Affair, as it would be in 2014.

IV. 1979-1985: Neo-liberalism, the Right, and Depoliticisation

The ascendance of Margret Thatcher marked the beginning of a shift in the strategic orientation of student activity from offence to defence, and the struggles against her education policy would define politics at Warwick during this period. As Education Secretary in the early 1970s, Thatcher had been defeated in a major struggle with the NUS and SUs over attempts to impose restrictions on union activity and introduce an opt-in system for union membership (Day, 2014). Her premiership saw intensified efforts nationally to limit the range of political activities SU's could support, leading to a range of battles over *ultra vires* payments at Warwick. Thatcher's changes in overseas student fees dominated the 1979-80 period, and her cuts to HE funding fundamentally altered the character of the University of Warwick. A visit of a government minister, Sir Keith Joseph, in 1983, and the subsequent fine imposed on WSU for disorderly activity, would lead to a huge 'Fight the Fine' campaign over Union autonomy from management control.

Thatcher's reign emboldened WCA, and far-right elements started emerging for the first time on campus. The far-left began to fracture between the Socialist Workers Student Organisation (SWSO), Revolutionary Communist Society and orthodox Trotskyist Spartacist League, and abortive attempts to organise libertarian socialist groups like Red Flame and the Warwick Anarchists began (Red Flame Group, 1979). Anti-imperialist group Troops Out sparked debate over Britain's role in Northern Ireland, and women's liberation activists – probably the most maligned political grouping on campus – were the epicentre of a raging debate over the meaning and value of feminism.

IV(i). Thatcher's offensive: neo-liberalism and the right rise

Thatcher's and Reagan's rise is commonly marked as the period in which neo-liberal political economy became hegemonic across the West (Harvey, 2005). Thatcher launched an 'attack upon the unions' (Edwards, 1989: 207), including SUs. Legislation restricted the range of reasons unions could ballot for strike action (ibid), Special Branch and MI5 were arrayed against militant workers (Milne, 2004), and techniques from colonial Hong Kong were imported to the UK to form new riot control methods (Northam, 1989). As the Miners' Strike and Wapping Dispute were lost in the 1980s, class struggle declined to some of the lowest levels seen in the twentieth century. Thatcher's counter-revolution can be viewed as, on the one hand, the victory of the reactionary forces which opposed the late-1960 movements, and on the other, a response to the crisis of profitability and global capitalism of the late 1970s. The 1980s were, however, still a time of high political contention as the neo-liberal project was imposed and fought against, as shown by the micro-history of Warwick's campus.

Shortly after taking office, for example, Thatcher forced students from overseas to pay the entire cost of their degree. This went hand-in-hand with massive cuts to the higher education sector. In response, WSU went into occupation of Senate House on November 8, 1979 during an NUS day of action (The Warwick Boar, 1979a), and again on February 13, 1980 (The Warwick Boar, 1980). The education cuts were also a constant point of discussion in the *Boar*, with contingents of Warwick students regularly attending London demonstrations against the cuts – 150 on November 28, 1979, a number nevertheless described as 'pitiful' in the *Boar* (The Warwick Boar, 1979d).

The legitimacy of struggle and direct action remained widely accepted: the Labour Club was still confidently asserting in 1979 that 'direct action with the support of the mass of students is a good and effective method of furthering a cause' (Barden, 1979), and were

still supporting calls for rent strikes in 1986 (Labour Club, 1986). Tactics like rent strikes were so taken for granted that small – and successful – rent strikes in Westwood in January 1982 and May 1983 over lack of heating and building works being carried out during exam season were treated as a normal occurrence in the *Boar* (The Warwick Boar, 1982; Mote, 1983). Students joining unofficial pickets of local Asian migrant workers at the Sandhar and Kang cash and carry in October 1982 was still considered front page news for the *Boar*, although it was noted as a rare occurrence (Jones, 1982). It was not particularly unusual for 350 Warwick students to attend a CND demonstration in London in October 1981, a proportion which would rarely be matched in the later period (Sheard, 1981).

The far-right was on the rise, nationally and on-campus, and WCA was emboldened. In November 1982, racist, pro-KKK, pro-rape posters were plastered over the SU building (Mote, 1982a), suggesting a National Front presence on campus. Students from the Revolutionary Communists were attacked by up to 150 National Front supporters in a lay-by on their way to a Bloody Sunday Demonstration in early 1982 (Palmer, 1982). As a riposte to Troops Out and anti-militarist activists, several students on the hard-right attempted to form a 'Military Society' in 1983 (Jones, 1983b). WCA, after treading carefully during the Files Affair, went on the offensive. Following the dropping of the 1983 fine against WSU, the Conservative Association assisted the administration in identifying students who had been active in the demonstration against Sir Keith Joseph. The Association elected David Hoile – a far-right white Rhodesian who wore 'hang Nelson Mandela' badges – as their chair (Bottery, 1983). So extreme were the society's antics, that following the publication of their journal, *Icepick!* – which featured a woman with a hatchet embedded in her skull on the front page and described the Troops Out society as 'campus vermin' (WCA, 1981: 1,5) – the Association was temporarily expelled from the National Federation of Conservative Students, partly for hosting

alleged National Front infiltrators (Johnson, 1982). The membership re-affirmed the hard line by electing the ultra-conservative, Monday Club-associated Steve Brown as chair after Hoile stepped down in 1983 (The Warwick Boar, 1983). WCA, however – whilst invigorated – was still relatively isolated. The Association's candidates rarely won WSU elections, the Conservative position rarely prevailed at UGMs, and a long-running campaign for a rightist disaffiliation from the NUS was repeatedly beaten back with ease (Ovenden, 1983).

Such reactionary and fascist activity did not go unchallenged. In response to the fascist posters, the Anti-Racist and Anti-Fascist Society (ARAF) formed and led a demonstration across campus. Hoile was punched during a UGM after describing ARAF as 'jumped-up 3rd world cliques' on November 26, 1982 (Mote, 1982b). One professor emeritus who arrived in Leamington from the Pacific in the early 1980s said that the presence of anti-fascist organising on campus helped him feel more welcomed in the UK (Paliwala, 2016) – a form of positive 'impact' on the 'community' which Shattock (2015) ignores in his book.

IV(b). *Ultra vires*, independents and the radical left

Three key processes will be analysed regarding activism and WSU: the changing nature of far-left engagement with the SU as a site of struggle, the growth in the depoliticised 'independent' slate, and the rise of right-wing attempts, in tandem with the government, to beat the SU into legal submission.

Firstly, there was engagement with the SU by the far-left: slates were often run by the SWSO, and a collaborative and successful 'Left Umbrella' slate ran in 1982 (Hood, 1982). Red Flame and the SWSO engaged in serious debates with the broad-left and Labour over the 1979 Senate House occupation's demands and length. The radical-left was still constantly trying to censure the executive, which it saw as weak and likely to sell-

out; but the SU was generally viewed as a tool and site of struggle. Radical-left candidates, however, rarely won sabbatical elections, except for one position in 1982.

Secondly, whilst still largely marginal, depoliticised consumer subjectivities were beginning to emerge. In the 1970s, a 'stagnant clique' of Labour Club members dominated the elections (The Warwick Boar, 1979b). It was 'all change' as the independents won in 1980 (Vixen, 1980), by a landslide in 1981, and gained all four sabbatical positions in February 1983. Whereas the far- and broad-left slates were agreed on the importance of struggle against management and the government – although they often differed on tactics and the importance of wider political issues – the independents were starting to push a more overtly depoliticised line. One extensive feature from a leader of the independents, Keyte (1984), argued in 1984 that the independents' 'programme of development […] has created the Union as it exists today'. Keyte argued that, 'Direct action is wholly destructive and is not a respectable form of protest any more' (ibid), a growing minority opinion. Richard Jones, the independent President of WSU in 1983/4, for example, opposed the SWSO's motion for a militant demonstration against Margret Thatcher's visit to open the Science Park in 1984 because 'violence would […] adversely affect the job prospects of Warwick graduates' (Trevis, 1984). Keyte called for the development of 'commercial power' within the SU to replace the late-1960s slogan of 'student power'. Although the independents were not Conservatives – they opposed government higher education policy – they did display key features of neo-liberal ideology, including calling for the abolition of the Union's democratic body, the UGM, expanding revenue-generating activities, and stopping the SU from involving itself in extra-campus struggles. In this period, neo-liberal ideology began to shape the 'feelings

and identities of everyday people' (Srnicek & Williams, 2015: KL985),[3] including at the University of Warwick.

Finally, and most crucially, campus Conservatives acted as the shock troops of the Thatcherite attack on union autonomy. The main point of contention was over *ultra vires* payments, or the use of union funds for political activities considered beyond the powers of the Union as a charity serving the interests of its students. The issue had come up in 1969 as a UGM debated the legality and political utility of making potentially *ultra vires* payments to those fined in anti-apartheid demonstrations. The UGM voted to form a committee to find a way to work around the law (WSU, 1969b). One speaker argued that, 'If we wanted to do it we could' (WSU, 1969a) – suggesting that, to an extent, the issue was one of political will and struggle, a struggle which the left slowly lost over the course of the next decade and a half.

In 1978, one student, Zane Morris, worked with the National Association for Freedom and WCA (WCA, 1978) to seriously threaten legal action against the Union for subsidising coaches to the Grunwick pickets on October 17, 1977 (The Warwick Boar, 1997; WSU, 1978). In this case, WCA managed to 'unite every other political group on campus against them' (The Warwick Boar, 1978b) and the Association were soon pressured into withdrawing support for Morris due to the 'enormous weight of opposition to our actions' (The Warwick Boar, 1978a).

After the failure of this early attempt to limit the range of political activities the SU could involve itself in, the *ultra vires* issue continued to bubble away for the entire period. As Thatcher took power, the broad-left and many union sabbatical officers began to follow a more timid NUS line which viewed avoiding a potentially damaging court ruling as the paramount concern. Over the course of 1979-1985, this argument became

[3] KL: Kindle Location.

dominant. In 1978, for instance, the Labour Club was publishing materials supporting the payments and opposing the 'ultra virus of the Tories' (Warwick Labour Club, 1978), and Warwick SU published a statement during the Zane Morris case stating that 'this law, if enforced […] will destroy the nature of students unions' (WSU, 1978). Prolonged efforts by WCA changed this political common sense. On November 28, 1979, a UGM voted to make illegal payments of £200 to Leamington Battered Wives Refuge and £100 to Draxton strike fund (The Warwick Boar, 1979c). WCA immediately provided details of the payments to the Treasury (Thomas, 1980), which began pressuring WSU sabbatical officers (Mead, 1980). This resulted in the President and Treasurer of WSU repaying £50 of the payments each to avoid further legal action (Perrett, 1980). A later President, Robin Edwardes, later assured the Treasury that the 1979/80 pressure resulted in WSU taking 'positive steps to ensure that it would avoid accusations of 'improper expenditure' in the future' (Edwardes, 1981).

The attack was bolstered at a national level by the 1983 advice of the Attorney-General (1983). Since the only expenditure proper to SUs was that which contributed to 'the interests of either the students as such or the affairs of the college as such', payments to, say, 'a political cause in a foreign country' would be *ultra vires*, and liable for legal action. The advice stated that, 'for a Union to expend its charitable funds in supporting a political campaign or demonstration is extremely unlikely to be justifiable' (ibid). A WSU memo argued that the Attorney General's letter was 'obviously a political attack, but unfortunately the law is on his side' (WSU, 1984a).

Ultimately, the *ultra vires* campaigns were explicitly right-wing political campaigns designed to mobilise a reactionary national political atmosphere to legally restrict the activities of SUs. The right was largely unable to win in a democratic arena – so they turned to the coercive apparatus of the state. London Conservative Students (c.1984)

even issued a pamphlet in the mid-1980s detailing how to launch *ultra vires* campaigns on local campuses. In October 1983, an attempt to pass a motion for free coaches to a CND demonstration in London was heavily defeated at a UGM (Michael, 1983). By 1984, *Spinach* magazine was describing 'the ubiquitous belief that if Warwick does break the ultra-vires law then we will be "jumped on" by the courts' (Hanks, 1984: 11). The issue cropped up at Warwick once again in 1985 over donations to the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) during the miners' strike. A UGM initially voted to buy 40 'educational packs' for £2000 from the NUM, but after a campaign against the decision by the Union executive, a second UGM overturned the payments. The struggle was much shorter than it had been in previous years, with a brief victory for the Miners Support Group overturned after a short campaign by the right, in tandem with the Union executive. The loss of the *ultra vires* battle stands as a symbolic lynch-pin for the wider transformation of SUs into depoliticised consumer rights bodies, a transformation taken to even greater lengths in the later period.

IV(c). Union autonomy and reshaping Warwick: management reacts to Thatcher

Two processes on management's side will be examined in this section: how the administration changed the structure of the University in response to Thatcher's higher education policy, and how it attempted to take advantage of the government's reforms in order to impose disciplinary punishment on WSU and limit its unruly activities.

The neo-liberal University

The way management responded to Thatcherism differed vastly from the reaction of most students. Publicly, in response to the campus occupations, the administration condemned Thatcher's increases in international students' fees (Butterworth, 1980). Privately, management was immediately sensing an opportunity to increase revenues from

overseas students. Management thought, according to Michael Shattock – then Academic Registrar – that 'if this is a source of income let's go and get a lot more overseas students' (Shattock, 2012-2013). A Warwick office in Hong Kong was duly set up in 1982, and the University soon became known for its high proportion of international students.

With Warwick facing a funding reduction of 10% (Clark, 1998), Thatcher's cuts 'gave an added impetus to [the] idea of generating income from outside' (Shattock, 2012-2013), leading to the creation of the 'Earned Income Group'. Shattock narrates his thinking behind the group: 'I thought well, you know what the companies do; they have a board, so why don't we create a board' (ibid). Within the Group, 'Professional managers are hired to run the various units in a businesslike up-scale fashion, and can be fired, as in private business, when they do not do the job' (Clark, 1998: 22). The University instituted a 'save half, make half' policy, saving 5% of its funding in cut backs, and gaining the other 5% through revenue-generation. As Clark puts it, 'In the pressure cooker of UK university finance during the early 1980s, [the policy] quickly became, for Warwick, a much valued institutional idea' (Clark, 1998: 16). By the end of 1990 Warwick was generating over 50% of its own income (Shattock, 2012-2013), as government funding fell from 70% in 1980 to 43% in 1990 (Clark, 1998: 26). Attempts were made to form new money-making ventures: links with business were hugely expanded with the foundation of Warwick Manufacturing Group, which partnered with 'over 300 firms' (Clark, 1998: 17), including BAE Systems, Rolls-Royce, and other corporate titans. Conferences were expanded, a high-tech Science Park was opened in 1984, and Warwick Business School began its lengthy transition from leftist industrial relations research unit to corporate management school. It was not just the central organisation which shifted during this time: 'Entrepreneurship has […] come to characterize virtually all academic fields' (Clark, 1998: 27).

What began to take place at Warwick in this period was a process of *neo-liberalisation*. Whilst Warwick was always the 'Business University' (Thompson, 1970), neo-liberalisation denotes a state-incentivised attempt to forcibly create markets, competitive behaviour and corporate logics where they would not normally exist (Davies, 2014). Such a project fell on fertile ground at Warwick, and largely intensified existing trends at the institution. Creating markets, as Mills (2016: 164) puts it, 'requires the development of complex calculative processes, as well as mechanisms of accountability and control, whether in the shape of regulatory oversight, auditing, or internal monitoring and reporting'. In higher education, this process has occurred in research with the Research Excellence Framework, and teaching with the Teaching Excellence Framework; commercial behaviour has been encouraged through budget cuts, buttressed by relentless league tables (Sealey-Huggins & Pusey, 2013: 82). Thatcher's reforms incentivised Warwick to increase its commercial activities and to think and act like a corporation in a competitive market. As a result, Warwick has prioritised gaming the metrics of competition and promoting the University's brand identity. If an institution is required to generate revenue like a corporation, ideals of academic freedom, civil liberties and diversity come second to external brand image.

The Fight the Fine Campaign

The 1983-4 Fight the Fine Campaign illustrates the complex dynamics between national regulatory changes, management repression, the union executive, and the radical left. The episode – and the ultimate defeat of the radical left by the union exec – encapsulates the growing trends of the era.

In 1980, the Thatcher government's reforms to SU funding meant that union funds would be directed through the parent university, rather than earmarked directly for the union itself through the Local Education Authority (Day, 2014). As a *Boar* article

presciently warned at the time, 'Because the money is not ear-marked, they [universities] will be able to dent Students' Unions rightful share of the U.G.C. funds' (Riley, 1980).

Warwick's management took full advantage of this new power in 1983. On October 31, Sir Keith Joseph visited campus. A UGM three days before the demonstration had accepted a last-minute amendment from the Labour Club to attempt to physically block Sir Joseph from entering (Eaton, 1983b). Outside Arden Hall in Westwood, the demonstrations got out of the control of the Union exec: Sir Joseph's car was blockaded and pelted with eggs (Butler & Eaton, 1983).

In response, Butterworth growled that the Union was 'going to pay' (ibid). Within weeks, the University imposed a £30,000 fine – reduction from its grant – on WSU, a huge sum at the time. Management was egged on by national Conservative figures: Patrick Jenkin, Secretary of State for the Environment, backed Warwick's decision and called on other universities to follow suit (The Times, 1983). The fine, however, largely united campus against management. The struggle rapidly became one of Union autonomy, or 'the principle of the ability of the University to dictate to the Union' (Buckley & Eaton, 1983). A 'Fight the Fine' campaign was launched, and all University food and drink outlets were boycotted 'with the aim of a complete shutdown of these outlets' (Eaton, 1983a), reportedly costing Warwick £20,000 a week (Daubney & Groves, 1983). The boycott was so successful that the University began negotiations in December (Flynn, 1983).

Over the Christmas break, the dynamics of conflict changed. The University drafted an agreement with WSU, which was put to a UGM. The executive dropped the boycott at the start of the second term and proposed a rent strike – and a national NUS demo (Stubbs, 1984) – if a final agreement was not reached with the University. The draft agreement proposed dropping the fine, in return for concessions: seven days' notice prior to campus demonstrations, which could only be passed with a two-thirds majority at

UGMs and would require the use of stewards; recognition of the involvement of the courts in legal breaches; and a pledge not to obstruct disciplinary procedures initiated against individuals by the University (WSU, 1984c). The agreement was bitterly opposed by the left and the January 20 UGM 'overwhelmingly' voted it down (Groves & Shanks, 1984a). In response, the Union exec launched a fierce campaign to pass it at a second UGM, utilising scare tactics and their considerable resources to turn the vote around (WSU, 1984b). In the event, the left's motion to continue the conflict was defeated 517-411, and the left were condemned as 'wreckers' in the student media afterwards (Groves & Shanks, 1984b). The left's worries, however – that there was no commitment by the University to forgo future punitive fines – were proven correct in 1986/7, when the University withheld the Union's grant during a rent strike (Turner, 1987).

The independent-dominated executive had acted as a damper throughout. The President, Jones (1983a), stated that, 'The actions of the Union Executive were at all times to try and pacify the minority of unruly demonstrators'. The executive were very explicit that the agreement contained 'measures which the Union Executive consider safeguards of our own position […] [and] measures through which we can ensure proper control of our own demonstrations' (WSU, 1984). In the event, the left, out of power in the executive, was outgunned. The 1984 visit of Thatcher to open the Science Park was the 'major testing ground' for the agreement (Buckely, 1984). Hundreds of police deployed surveillance cameras and impenetrable lines, resulting in a fairly tame reception for the Prime Minister. The visit was the 'last major student disturbance at Warwick' of the period (Bradshaw, 2003: 60), until occupations and clashes re-emerged in the 2010s.

V. 2008-2017: Marketisation, Neo-Anarchism and Austerity

The post-2008 period was marked largely by three things: the legacy of the alter-globalisation movement at the turn of the millennium, the global financial crisis, and the deepening impacts of neo-liberalism in higher education. The libertarian left became ascendant in Warwick's activist scene as classic Leninist and Trotskyite groups declined. By 2008, People & Planet had become a 'hub of lefty activism' (Rossdale, 2017), and acted as 'an umbrella for a lot of different groups' (Maughan & Taherzadeh, 2017): the food co-op, the allotment, Fossil Free Warwick (FFW), and its very own 'militant wing' (Browne, 2016), Weapons out of Warwick (WooW). The 2012-13 rape crisis in the Social Workers Party (SWP) largely finished off the Trotskyite influence on campus (Platt, 2014). In 2009, for example, the libertarian scene was willing to promote a talk by SWP member Alex Callinicos (Dissident Warwick, 2009), and a 2010 ethnography recorded that many activist entered the scene at Warwick through the Socialist Party and SWP (Browne, 2010). In 2014, however, a Callinicos talk was disrupted by the Anti-Sexist Society and others (Warwick Anti-Sexist Society, 2014).

A key feature of the period is the growth of small, affinity-group-oriented collectives. The journal *Dissident Warwick* became a 'focal point for activists and radicals' around WooW and P&P in 2007-10 (Rossdale, 2017). Warwick Against the Cuts emerged in 2010 – although Warwick was considered a quiet campus during the national 2010 student movement. Occupy Warwick in 2011 coalesced a new generation, followed by PPU Warwick in 2013. 2012/13 was, however, a year of retreat for the left, prematurely declared the 'final death' of Red Warwick by one activist (Baker, 2013). Pivoting around a disagreement over the role of quotas in University bodies, a clash over identity politics destroyed PPU in 2014 (Maughan and Taherzadeh, 2017). Warwick For Free Education

emerged shortly afterwards, managing to successfully take advantage of a University over-reaction on December 3, 2014 to become a key political force on campus.

V(i). Alter-globalisation, the GFC and the populist turn

In general, classic working class struggle beyond campus was lower in this period than at any other time. Unlike the late 1960s militants, activists at contemporary Warwick are not educated on picket lines. There was little chance of mass worker organisation radicalising students into activism in this period, and the level of student activism – although hard to judge – was almost certainly lower in general than previous periods. WSU President of 1970/1, Will Fitzgerald (2016), estimated that 50-70 people were active on the far-left in the early period. Chris Browne, an activist from 2007-10, estimated there were around 40-50 people in the activist community then (Browne, 2016), despite a University student population over ten times larger.

Instead, the wider post-USSR alter-globalisation movement, emerging with the Zapatistas in 1994 and peaking during the battles of the summits from 1999-2001, has been a key influence on the radical activists at Warwick, particularly in the late 2000s. *Dissident Warwick* – explicitly modelled on the alter-globalisation media outlet *IndyMedia* (Dhaliwal, 2008: 4) – is littered with articles on the Zapatistas (e.g. Reader, 2009), and two of the activist who partook in an off-campus action in 2010 had visited Chiapas (Browne, 2010: 13). The activist modes of organising throughout the period were heavily influenced by the 'neo-anarchist' approaches that emerged in the 1990s and cemented in the UK during the climate camps (which many Warwick activists in the period attended [Browne, 2010: 6; Goodfellow, 2010]): "'small group" politics, of collectives and affinity groups organised in flexible networks' (Gerbaudo, 2017: 23), combined with a reluctance to engage with ruling institutions. The 'nucleus' of WooW, for instance, emerged from an affinity group which took part in the Faslane 365 blockade in 2007 at the UK's nuclear

weapons base in Scotland (Rossdale, 2017), and Holloway's book *Crack Capitalism* was a key influence for Warwick activists in the late 2000s (Browne, 2016). Occupy, the most recent manifestation of this style of politics, was directly mimiked at Warwick during a two-week tent occupation outside Senate House in December 2011.

Since the 'movement of the squares', the global left has undergone a 'populist turn', melding many of the neo-anarchist forms of organising with a more direct engagement with established political structures and electoral politics (Gerbaudo, 2017). This has, to some extent, been mirrored on campus. WFFE, whilst maintaining largely the same internal organising modes domimant at Warwick since WooW, had a more structured commitment to leveraging management for concessions, put more resources into SU elections than earlier groups, and started engaging in local electoral politics during the 2017 election.

Another key wider force shaping activism has been the 2008 global financial crisis. The vanishing 'promises of post-university job security and social mobility' (Sealey-Huggins & Pusey, 2013: 80) has become the primary reference point for student activists in the West. In the UK, the economic crisis intersected with the ascendence of a harshly-neo-liberal, Conservative-dominated Coalition Government in 2010, which implimented nation-wide austerity, tripling tuition fees and ending bursuries for poorer students. Continuing a lengthy project, the Conservative Party intensified efforts to marketise and neo-liberalise the entire higher education sector. Worldwide, the student mobilisations of the 2010s have been characterised primarily by resistance to this political economy (ibid). The emergence of PPU and WFFE at Warwick marks the first time activist groups have primarily defined their activities around issues of higher education: PPU's first statement asserts their 'opposition to the continuing marketization and privatization of higher education', and condemns the change of university education 'from a public good to a

private investment' (PPU, 2013). A dynamic interaction has occurred between activists and Warwick's management, where state-directed neo-liberal reform is embraced by management, sparking resistance and dissent from the student body, encouraging a cycle of conflict.

V.(ii) Shifting relations: activists seize a neutered SU

The 1990s and 2000s has seen a marked intensification of the tendencies examined in the 1979-85 period. SUs have largely been stripped of their political function, afraid to take a position on anything not directly relevant to students, staffed by permanent bureaucracies, overseen by often unelected trustees and hemmed in by charity regulations at every turn. Ideologically, many sabbatical officers and students see them as little more than consumer rights groups, facilitators of clubs and societies, and food and drink service providers.

The 1983 Attorney General advice is 'still seen as the basis for the control of SU expenditure to this day' (Day, 2014). John Major declared that the 'days in which [SUs] march and demonstrate at the taxpayer's expense are numbered' as he shepherded the 1994 Education Act through parliament, legislation which further formally restricted the range of activities SUs could undertake to that which promoted 'the general interests of its members as students' (Part III, 20(1)(a)). In 2010, SUs lost their exempt charity status, bringing them under the direct supervision of the Charity Commission (Bols, 2014). SUs were further neo-liberalised by being included in the student satisfaction survey, the National Student Survey (ibid), reducing their multi-faceted activities to one simple aggregated metric score.

An interview with three sabbatical officers from the 2016/17 sabbatical team, who consider themselves to be 'left-wing, and radically so' (Panda, Pilot, & Worsdale, 2017), revealed the difficulties facing activists occupying institutional roles in

contemporary SUs. In short, 'people are always terrified of being in *ultra vires*, or in contravention of charity law'. The three described how the Charity Commission is 'like this faceless antagonist always leaning over your shoulder'; during their term, WSU has received 'questions' from the Commission about certain political activities (which cannot be described for legal reasons). One officer stated that, 'we're always having to justify why we're doing something in terms of why it will affect students […] We're always on the backfoot'. The three officers continue to fear the Union's block grant being cut by the University as a punitive measure for strongly opposing management's actions.

From 2008-13, activists 'didn't really think that [WSU] was a body that was going to really drive change, it was just something useful' for legitimising campaigns (Browne, 2016). Motions were put forward to general meetings and to Student Council, usually containing little more than symbolic backing and a mandate for sabbatical officers to provide some sort of support role. The days of students voting to occupy in a UGM before going straight into occupation are 'long gone' (Panda, Pilot, & Worsdale, 2017): if anyone tried to propose a direct action motion or a potentially *ultra vires* payment, it would almost certainly be spiked by the impact assessment team, the trustees, or the democracy executive, only some of which are elected (ibid). Union general meetings are no longer sovereign in the SU; power lies in a mixture of referenda, sabbatical officers and trustees. This has harmed the left's ability to pierce common sense on campus. Nat Panda, Postgraduate Officer and student at Warwick for a decade who lived through the reform to the power of the general meeting, said: 'at those general meetings, people's minds were changed, you had 250-350 people in a room and you're hearing someone and in that moment they could change your mind – you do not get that [any more]' (Panda, Pilot, & Worsdale, 2017).

Generally, WSU refused to formally support any of the campus occupations which took place throughout the period. During the 2013 PPU occupation of Senate House, the SU failed to support the group, leading one occupier to condemn WSU as 'a passive and politically inept consumer rights bureau' (quoted in Allen, 2013). The SU explicitly stated that, due to being bound by 'legal constraints', it could not 'formally support any form of unlawful direct action' (ibid). Even in December 2016, when WFFE occupied an entire conference building for two weeks – and the sabbatical team contained several WFFE members or supporters – WSU would only pledge support for the demands, not the tactic of the occupation: the sabbatical officers played a 'mediator role […] with the caveat that we were quite clearly supportive of the aims of the occupation' (Panda, Pilot, & Worsdale, 2017). Labelling occupations 'unlawful' is, in part, a matter of interpretation, and a signal of how fearful sabbatical officers are of being held personally accountable for breaches. The one exception to this was in January 2009, when a nine-day solidarity occupation of a lecture theatre during the Israeli attack on Gaza gained the support of 83% of a huge Emergency General Meeting (The Boar, 2009).

2014-17 saw a shift in the way activists related to the executive bodies of WSU. For perhaps the first time in Warwick's history, radicals managed to get several of their own elected to sabbatical positions. In 2016, a WFFE supporter was elected President, and almost the entire sabbatical team was comprised of supporters of the radical-left and liberation groups. A WFFE member was elected President in 2017, possibly the first time a core member of the most radical left group on campus has taken up the highest office in the SU. The reasons for this stem, firstly, from the altered political context following the 2014 police violence, which led to 'a dramatic change to student politics and attitudes towards activism on campus', according to one observer (quoted in Woodman, 2015a). Secondly, lower levels of organised engagement with the SU's political processes made it easier for a well-coordinated, informal left slate to take power. Formal slates have been

abolished, and the only other serious competitive block which regularly runs candidates is the Labour Club. The populist turn in the left possibly gave further impetus to these forms of institutional engagement. Those activists who were elected to sabbatical roles, in turn, used groups external to WSU – like WFFE – as 'a threat' in negotiations with management over a planned tuition fee rise in 2016/17 (Panda, Pilot, & Worsdale, 2017). Leftist sabbatical officers in this period did not feel able to issue threats of direct Union action in response to management; instead, they used their connections with smaller direct action groups as a latent threat, a significant shift from the dynamics of earlier years.

V.(iii) Management on the back-foot: activists gain the upper hand

Two key processes will be examined in this section: the intensified neo-liberalisation of Warwick, and the dynamic interaction between repression and resistance.

Warwick continued to be a trailblazer in the neo-liberalisation of higher education. One key neo-liberal process has been the casualisation of work: outsourcing, zero-hours contracts, minimal employment rights and sparse union coverage. Warwick created an entire higher education employment system, UniTemps, which funnels students and others into non-academic work in classic 'precarious' fashion (Standing, 2011). Started on campus, Warwick rolled out the project to other universities across the UK. In 2015, plans were afoot to do the same thing for certain teaching and marking functions. TeachHigher, the 'internal outsourcing' scheme which was set to organise the new employment relations, was going to be franchised across the rest of the sector (McVegas, 2015). In response, a student-staff campaign successfully pushed Warwick to scrap the entire project (Grove, 2015), utilising a threatened national demonstration on campus and a management on the back foot after huge reputational damage following the 2014 police violence.

From 2010, Warwick Business School was largely stripped of its last vestiges of leftist research and teaching as it underwent a brutal management-imposed restructuring (Parker, 2014). £11m was ploughed into hiring out 60% of the 17th floor of The Shard in London, in order to 'make a stronger and deeper connection with lots of businesses', according to a key figure in the venture (quoted in Woodman, 2015b). Warwick's 'particular kind of subordinate relationship with industrial capitalism' which Thompson (2013: 17) analysed in 1970 is still going strong: in 2003, the Lambert Review pronounced Warwick 'one of the most entrepreneurial universities in the country', 'committed to a centralised management structure' (Lambert, 2003). The author of that report, which lauded 'Business-University Collaboration', became head of the Confederation of British Industry before being appointed Warwick's Chancellor in 2008 (Hall, 2008).

Management's tactics of control underwent a crisis during the period. In 2008, security were instructed to expel WooW activists from careers fairs for wearing anti-militarist t-shirts (Browne, 2008), and would call police to protect arms industry events on campus (Rossdale, 2017). As late as October 2014, students from FFW were forcibly thrown out of a careers fair for wearing grim reaper outfits whilst protesting Shell's presence (Yip, 2014). All that changed on December 3, 2014, when the police were called to one of WFFE's first actions on campus, a brief sit-in at Senate House. CS gas and Tasers were deployed, and three people arrested, with viral videos of the violence contributing to a 1,000-strong demonstration the day after, an 8-day occupation of the Rootes Building, and a high court injunction indefinitely banning all occupations across the entirety of campus (Woodman, 2015a). During this crisis, management 'were exposed, suddenly they needed to make statements […] they were very smart before that' (Maughan & Taherzadeh, 2017). A more hands-off regime was instituted in the aftermath: plain-clothed security guards deployed for routine activities and to monitor an active

student as they researched in the library (Warwick Security Services, 2015a),[4] social media monitoring (Warwick Security Services, 2015b), extensive use of body cameras, and 'intelligence-gathering' prior to careers fairs (Woodman, 2016b). The 2014 injunction was dropped in 2017 following a lengthy campaign for its repeal (Halligan, 2016), and occupations were successfully re-instated as a legitimate student tactic during the December 2016 Slate occupation.

[4] This was the author.

VI. Conclusion

If the purpose of militant research is to 'contribute to processes of critical reflection and transformation of our movements' (Russell, 2015: 226), then we should draw some lessons from Warwick's history.

Campus struggle, in intensity and form, is directly related to the level of class struggle outside the University. A dynamic interaction between student activists and wider working class struggles is a necessary condition for any revival of widespread resistance in the 21st century. Many of the campus activists at Warwick and elsewhere were radicalised by a broad culture of contention and resistance in the 1960s and 1970s. With nearly 50% of people in the West now passing through university, the left needs a radical campus culture to re-emerge – but this culture is unlikely to germinate and persist without wider struggles to emulate, participate in and bolster.

SUs have become less useful as vehicles of struggle, as a national right-wing effort to neuter them succeeded in the 1980s and beyond. Reversing these restrictions and fighting the right-wing students who would help impose them is a vital task for any renewed student movement. Thinking hard about an alternative national regulatory regime, or alternative institutional structures outside of the existing organisations, is a crucial intellectual exercise ahead.

Neo-liberalism has intensified many of the negative processes extant at Warwick pre-1979, and made the waters of struggle harder to swim in. The ideology's impact on WSU and the structure of Warwick – rendering both focused on competition, consumerism and metrics – has been vast, and no structural transformation can take place without confronting neo-liberalism on a national level. What the story of Warwick

reminds us, however, is that a return to a pre-neo-liberal capitalist social democracy can never be sufficient. We must forge new universities, radically divorced from the past.

A primary lesson for student activists is the level of planning managements put into combatting campus militants. Management largely consider themselves in a power struggle, and are willing to use all methods at their disposal to eliminate unrest: surveillance, files, injunctions, the police. Activists must recognise this strategic reality and respond in kind.

The majority of the history recorded above has never been documented before. During the 50th anniversary celebrations, a tale of a unified campus inexorably expanding to success was, with some exceptions, the one told. This dissertation is an attempt to provide a corrective to this story: to reveal the conflicts and contentions which have been present at Warwick since the early years, to remember the gallant efforts of generations of activists who have struggled for democracy, justice and self-improvement. Not to hold an inverted mirror to the University's history – presenting a heroic story of unified, homogenous student struggle against a tyrannical management – but to remember activists' and students' own internal conflicts and failures. To chart the complex and multi-faceted relationship between and within the student body, academic and non-academic staff, management, and the state.

The process of institutional memory formation has differed greatly between the University and WSU: the former's buildings are a who's who of the establishment: lords (Scarman), chancellors (Radcliffe) and industrialists (Rootes). The latter's have been named after and dedicated to guerrilla fighters (Xananas), anti-apartheid leaders (Mandela's Bar) and anti-fascist martyrs (Kevin Gatley). In 1986, WSU's Freshers' handbook still contained a foreword by E P Thompson describing the history of the 1970 struggle and calling for the 'tradition' to be 'renewed' by each generation (Thompson,

1986). In more recent decades, as the process of neo-liberalisation of SUs has expanded, this commitment to alternative institutional history has faded. The Freshers' handbook is now more often a 'glossy brochure' (Fitzgerald, 2014). The research contained in this dissertation is already contributing to a process of re-institutionalising the memory of struggle at WSU, although short of wider institutional reforms brought about by a large-scale nation-wide student movement, such success is likely to be limited and fleeting.

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