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Utopia Ltd.? Capitalist Utopianism and Model Company Villages in Interwar England

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Adam McKie, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: Date: ___14/09/2020_____

Abstract

This thesis examines the concept of 'capitalist utopianism' between the world wars, primarily through the construction and ideological dismantling of two self-titled 'utopian' company settlements built in England. The thesis proposes three principles of liberal capitalist utopianism – a concept that few scholars have discussed and is thought to be 'invisible as a utopia': liberty as self-determination, efficiency as universal opulence, and justice as unity of interests. It explores this social dreaming through the 'three faces' of utopianism: social theory, intentional societies, and (to a lesser extent) utopian literature. Through this methodology, it outlines how these principles were attempted to be realised in the model company settlements of Silver End, built by the Crittall Manufacturing Company in north Essex between 1926 and 1932, and East Tilbury, built by British Bata in south Essex after 1934.

By examining how the political economy traversed the interwar 'crisis of capitalism', it enriches our understanding of England's relative interwar stability through an interdisciplinary approach that combines the history of ideas and economic and political theory, with its praxis and shortcomings in two detailed case studies. The technocratic and technological utopianism of these years was championed in these villages and encapsulated in their modernistic architecture. It demonstrates how the emergence of welfare capitalism was engineered to reduce class conflict, and how this operated in practice through the comprehensive 'enmeshment' of worker-residents. It outlines how a 'corporate consciousness' was fostered in these villages that attempted to create 'minor capitalists' of their working-class residents. It details how the internal contradictions of capitalism and capitalist utopianism undermined this utopianism, while stressing that the agency of workers and residents was crucial in the ideological dismantling of these autocratic projects. It concludes by arguing the origins of Britain's post-1945 social democracy, and the erosion of liberal capitalism, can be witnessed in these villages from the mid-1930s.

Contents

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This work is dedicated to my late brother Chris, whose free spirit would never have been contained by the companies I have written about. 'It wasn't a long innings, but it was a good one.'

List of Images and Tables

Abbreviations

Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU)

Bata Heritage Centre (BHC)

Braintree Museum (BM)

Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS)

Crittall Manufacturing Company (CMC)

Design and Industries Association (DIA)

Employers' Advisory Council (EAC)

Essex Record Office (ERO)

Federation of British Industries (FBI)

Management Advisory Committee (MAC)

Modern Records Centre (MRC)

National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives (NUBSO)

National Confederation of Employers' Organisations (NCEO)

Silver End Development Company (SEDC)

Silver End Heritage Society (SEHS)

Trades Union Congress (TUC)

Workers' Education Association (WEA)

Workers' Union/Transport and General Workers' Union (WU)

Introduction

'There have been hundreds of socialistic utopias, but no one hitherto has thought of inventing a capitalistic utopia', the eccentric Londoner William Margrie (1877-1960) wrote in February 1929. Over the course of a thirty-two-page pamphlet, he described his fanciful 'paradise.' It was a vision of Britain that encapsulated the right-wing optimism of the Machine Age. Born in Camberwell, Margrie was the youngest son of a small businessman and was raised to join his father in the property-owning democracy. After attending boarding school on a scholarship, he had been an active socialist but quickly became disillusioned, and later passionately defended the system he had once denounced.[1] His appeal to Britain's 'young men' was written just seven months after women gained equal enfranchisement in July 1928, and a few months before Britain's second (minority) Labour government took office; as Britain started its first period of genuine mass democracy by electing a nominally socialist government, across the English Channel the retreat from capitalism seemed more assured. In Germany, the Communist Party made significant parliamentary ground in the May 1928 elections, and the Reichstag remained firmly in the hands of socialists. A year later, in France, the right-wing Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré resigned and was replaced by a series of left-wing governments. Meanwhile, in October 1928 Joseph Stalin launched his first Five-Year Plan explicitly to compete with the West, just as the 'Roaring Twenties' in the USA was poised to abruptly end. Capitalism was at a juncture. Its ideological moorings were under attack, and alternative political economies increasingly seemed not only desirable , but viable. A crisis of capitalism

[1] William Margrie, *A Capitalist's Utopia: A Message for Workers, Politicians, and Employers* (Watts and Co., 1929); Peter Claus, 'Margrie, William', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (May 2006, www.oxforddnb.com).

was underway long before the Great Depression ripped through the economic and social fabric of the western world.[2]

What Britain needed, Margrie was convinced, was an entirely new philosophy that captured the hearts and minds of young *men* and steered them away from the 'illusions and fairy tales of socialism.' It was time, he reasoned, to clear away the past and unrepentantly embrace the elusive promise of prosperity for all. Set free from the restraints of the past, he predicted the imminent arrival of 'a real capitalist system' like never experienced before. To accompany his new philosophy, he sought to promote a new 'twentieth-century God' that would embody the 'captains of industry, merchant princes and capitalists': this was a brave new world, an 'enlightened, efficient, well-organised, scientific, public-spirited capitalist system.'[3] It was also a utopia unhindered by democracy or public institutions. His plan was straightforward: parliamentary powers were to be peacefully passed to 'the leading capitalists in Britain' who would rule the country through an organisation known as the 'British Chartered Company.' Democracy would be abandoned – an unnecessary 'sham' anyway, given 'the majority of British people take no interest in politics' – and parliament replaced by a paternalistic group of 'big-brained, broad-minded capitalists', whose dual motives of profit and public welfare (or managed greed) would benefit all. The loss of hard-earned democratic rights would be generously compensated by more wealth, leisure and pleasure. Before a company could join the ruling elite, it would first have to prove its commitment to 'modern' capitalism by demonstrating a generous range of welfare, and recreative provisions for workers. The largest

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[2] Margrie, *Capitalist's Utopia*. See Robert Boyce, *British Capitalism at a Crossroads, 1919-1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987). For a general discussion of the interwar 'Crisis of Capitalism' in Europe, see Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (Abacus, 1995), 109-141 and Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (Penguin, 1998), 106-40.
[3] Margrie, *Capitalist's Utopia*.

companies would also need to establish eugenics departments and ensure 'all decent, fit and intelligent young' employees were married and 'reproducing their kind.' Women, supposedly lacking the intelligence of men, were banned from work after marriage, while the 'feeble-minded and hopelessly inefficient' would be sterilised and segregated on the Isle of Wight.[4]

Margrie's ambition to privatise the role of government represented the zenith of an authoritarian liberal capitalist philosophy. Every local government and county council was to be scrapped, and all public services placed into private hands, which would operate 'more efficiently and economically.' The functions of local and national governments – including schooling, electricity and water supplies, sewage and waste management, transportation, libraries, healthcare, law and order, broadcasting, postal services and even the military – would now be run for profit. While the ruling elite would undoubtedly benefit handsomely in Margrie's capitalist utopia, he also envisioned it as mutually advantageous as 'every sensible workman would invest in his own firm or in the Company and become a capitalist': as profits soared all would prosper. Although the pamphlet was short, baffling at times, and appears to have made little public impact, it showcased some of the major principles that characterised capitalist utopianism between the wars, including a commitment to (extreme) economic liberalism, technocratic and undemocratic planning, technological utopianism, enforced class unity, a faith in inevitable 'progress', and an unyielding belief in meritocratic social mobility.

Little did Margrie know that less than 50 miles from his home in Peckham, a capitalist utopia was mid-way through completion. It was called Silver End, and barring the eugenics, was the realisation of his fanciful dream. Tucked away in a sleepy part of rural north Essex, a hamlet nestled in a woodland of silver birch trees had been torn down, and the landscape

[4] *Ibid*, 7-8, 26-30.

unrecognisably altered in the name of industrial progress. The whiteness of the trunks, which was said to have shone brightly in the morning sunlight, were replaced by a different sort of shimming light, that of starkly white, modernistic flat-roofed houses built by the Crittall Manufacturing Company (CMC). Labour and housing shortages, coupled with ongoing disputes with the local council and a pressing need to build a new factory had led the firm, the largest producer of steel windows in Britain, to 'pioneer' building a 'modern utopia' after December 1925. It was to be a 'dream village', as Francis 'the Guv'nor' Crittall (1860-1935) put it, the company's socially mobile governing director. Rather than repeating the errors and shortcomings of existing urban society, he envisioned a self-contained garden city that would provide the model answer to Britain's problems of unemployment, poverty, slums, overcrowding and destitute disabled ex-servicemen. But it was also a profit-making paradise built on a semi-conscious philosophy of capitalist utopianism, in which the company monopolised almost every aspect of residents' lives.[5]

The Crittall family quickly endowed the site with a fictionalised origin myth of enlightened discovery. While driving one autumn evening between the firm's factories in Witham and Braintree, company director Walter Crittall (1887-1956), Francis' second son and the CMC's chief creative force, spontaneously left the main road and headed into the bygone landscape of rural north Essex. 'The trees were turning gold, the leaves falling, the road rose gently, the air was silvery', he wrote. It was the 'ideal spot' for a new community, one 'where golden happiness begins.' He hurried back to his father and immediately convened a meeting of the firm's management. 'Readers may have heard about the signing of the Magna Carta,' he told his workers, 'the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Versailles or Locarno. Well, this

[5] *The Crittall Magazine* (December 1925), 220-23; Francis Crittall, *Fifty Years of Work and Play* (ET Heron, 1934), 119-21.

meeting adds one more to the famous gatherings of history, because it concerned the beginnings of a new town, built on the right lines.' That night they sat burning the midnight oil, and by the early hours of the morning had thrashed out a plan for their utopia, a 'town' where workers and management would live side-by-side in happiness and comfort.[6]

Francis' retelling of Silver End's discovery was equally as fabled, even if it contradicted his son. How could the social and political problems of the nation be combatted?

> That question presented itself to me in the small hours one morning when, in a silent house, I sat with my nightly whisky and soda […] suddenly through the clouds of shadowy fragrance I saw the answer. I saw a pleasant village of a new order, planted amid fields and trees and streams; I saw its quiet thoroughfares, its fine open spaces, its modern dwellings with ample gardens, its playing fields, recreations and amusements, and above all, I saw a contented community of Crittall families enjoying the amenities of town life in a lovely rural setting. Could this be the solution? A garden city in the heart of the country?[7]

If the image was bucolic, then the architecture of Silver End appeared like the antithesis of rural arcadia. The modernistic aesthetic chosen, the unadorned flat-roofed 'box' houses and monumental department stores, was a self-conscious break with the earthy and seemingly timeless hamlet. Unlike its utopian predecessors – the renaissance-inspired homes of Saltaire, the ornate arts and crafts buildings of Bournville or the timber façades of Tudorbethan Port Sunlight – Silver End did not vainly attempt to recapture a pre-industrial past in the age of industrial mass production. It would be nothing short of 'a revolution in the countryside', as the *Chelmsford Chronicle* foresaw, and by the time it was completed in 1932 many agreed. It was 'Britain's most amazing village', one journalist wrote, 'to peep at Silver End is to peep into

[6] *Crittall Magazine* (December 1925), 220-23.
[7] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 120-21.

the future. Here is village life organised on an almost palatial scale. Every house is futuristic in design.'[8]

It was also around this time, in January 1932, that whispers began in the press that a wealthy European businessman was making 'secret' visits to Essex and was planning to build a 'new industrial city' on the Tilbury marshes. The *Grays and Tilbury Gazette,* optimistic in the face of widespread scepticism, wrote that a 'gigantic new industrial centre' was imminent 'which is to contain no fewer than 40 different factories and the houses of the workpeople, together with a railway station, riverside jetty, shops, aerodrome, swimming baths, theatre, dance halls and cinema.' [9] Reports of a 'super-factory' being prepared on the lower banks of the Thames soon appeared throughout Britain, not only in the historic shoe-producing towns and cities of the Midlands, but in 'depressed areas' like Leeds, Sunderland and Aberdeen. East Tilbury 'promises to be another Silver End', as the *Essex Weekly News* told its readers, a 'garden city of most up-to-date character' with all the 'amenities of a modern town.' Eventually, when the sale of the 520-acre St Clere's Hall estate was confirmed (one of the largest land purchases in Essex history, at roughly the size of the City of London and costing a princely sum of almost £600,000) the former landowner declared construction was immediately due on 'a garden city on the very latest lines', a 'boot town' which would employ upwards of 5,000 people, although some stated 15,000.[10] Like Silver End, East Tilbury rejected the past as a guide for the future and embrace modern architecture: a twentieth-century utopia with functional, utilitarian housing engineered to maximise human happiness.

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[8] *Chelmsford Chronicle* (16 April 1926); *Dundee Evening Telegraph* (5 December 1934).
[9] Quoted in Johanna Smith, '"Work Collectively and Live Individually": The Bata Housing Estate at East Tilbury', *Twentieth Century Architecture* 9 (2008), 60.
[10] *Aberdeen Press and Journal* (29 January 1932); *Leeds Mercury* (29 January 1932); *Nottingham Journal* (29 January 1932); S*underland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* (29 January 1932); *The Times* (13 July 1932); *Essex Weekly News* (5 July 1935).

The businessman in question, Tomas Bata (1876-1932), was not unknown in Britain. Almost half the cheap shoes imported were produced by Bata, in and around his manufacturing empire of Zlín, Czechoslovakia. Known as 'the Czech Ford', many journalists lavished him with praise as 'the world's master shoemaker', 'the uncrowned shoe king of Europe.'[11] Others were less complementary, and labelled him an 'industrial dictator.'[12] His plan, as it gradually emerged, was to build a 'shoe-making colony' at East Tilbury, as he had done in other European countries, for the purpose of avoiding rising tariffs on his products. Not only was a mega-factory planned, but a privately owned township of 1,000 'garden' homes complete with Bata shops, schools, medical facilities, sports clubs (but no pubs), a cinema and airstrip: an industrial Mecca on the marshland. Moreover, he promised high wages with welfare benefits, low rents, holidays and, like Henry Ford and Francis Crittall, a five-day week.[13] Estimated to be worth around £10m, the *Daily Mail* claimed he was 'one of the most remarkable men in Europe; a leader of commerce and finance whose power and influence is felt throughout the world.' 'An individualist and a capitalist utterly opposed to Soviet principles', his self-made fortune was declared evidence of his wider ambition to 'defeat communism.'[14] Bata had overseen the growth of his hometown of Zlín from just 3,500 people in 1910 to over 21,000 in 1930, thanks to his enterprise which employed over 17,000 workers internationally by 1932. By the 1930s Zlín was effectively a company town, also built on garden-city principles, with Bata appointed mayor and his company housing upwards of 9,000 people.[15] In September 1932 the biggest

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[11] *The Bystander* (24 June 1931); *Daily Mail* (13 July 1932); *Leeds Mercury* (23 June 1933).
[12] *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* (13 July 1932).
[13] *Nottingham Evening Post* (24 December 1930); *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* (14 July 1933); Smith, 'Bata Estate', 60-62.
[14] *The Graphic* (23 January 1932); *Daily Mail* (13 July, 1 August 1932); *Lancashire Evening Post* (4 October 1933).
[15] Paul Devinat, 'Working Conditions in a Rationalised Undertaking: The Bata System and Its Social Consequences', *International Labour Review* 45 (1930), 49; Annett Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie: Das Experiment Zlín 1920–1938', *Bohemia* 43:1 (2002), 44.

cinema in Europe was opened there, with a capacity of 3,000. Even his staunchest opponents in Britain conceded Zlín was a 'wonder', and many allowed themselves to contemplate that within a few years, a modern city of tens of thousands would also rise above the Essex wasteland.[16]

The company's philosophy was 'something as radical, in a very different way, as communism in Russia', as the editor of the weekly works magazine in Britain, the *Bata Record*, put it.[17] The model of mass production pioneered in Zlín, of both communities and shoes, was recreated throughout the world in company towns usually located in deprived areas, to embody Bata's idealistic vision of capitalism.[18] As at Silver End, it planned to use the power of modern machinery and science to eliminate 'the old enemy of the human race – poverty' and champion the 'economic liberation of workers from their toil, misery and lack of knowledge.' East Tilbury was a self-titled 'land of promise' where the penniless reportedly walked for hundreds of miles to reach. Once construction started, the *Bata Record* hailed it as a self-sufficient 'model town on a once-desolate marshland' which would come to house 20,000 people: a 'utopian scheme' where there existed 'no unemployment, no poverty, no need for charitable organisations.'[19] But unlike Silver End, which was met with fanfare in the press, the development of East Tilbury divided opinion. Some saw British Bata as a saviour, and proof capitalism was still thriving: with unemployment over 14% in the south-east, over 22% nationally and around 17% in the boot and shoe industry, Bata's coming was to be

[16] *Edinburgh Evening News* (13 January 1932), 6; *The Graphic* (23 January 1932); *Times* (13 July 1932), 16; *Larne Times* (16 July 1932), 6; *The Scotsman* (14 September 1932), 10.
[17] Tomas Bata, *How I Began* (Thurrock: Bata British, 1934), 5
[18] Ondřej Ševeček, 'The Case of Company Towns of the Bata Concern', in Ševeček and Martin Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns of the Bata Concern: History, Cases and Architecture* (Stuttgart: Franz Werner Verlag, 2013), 15-20.
[19] *Bata Record* (25 May, 29 June, 20 July 1934, 8 February 1935, 13 May 1938).

celebrated.[20] Its arrival put an end to the 'state of hopelessness and dismay', as Reverend William Brown of Tilbury put it, and promised to liberate 'the thousands of unemployed who are losing all hope of a future and who are becoming, through no fault of their own, a menace to the state.'[21] But many were unconvinced. Foreseeing British Bata could soon become the largest foreign-owned company in England, some right-wing commentators denounced it as an 'industrial invasion' to be outright resisted.[22] The left's condemnation was more vicious. *The Graphic*'s Ferdinand Tuohy warned readers the company would impose 'a Frankenstein machine-slavery' on operatives, as it sought 'completely uninterfered-with control of the individual, as worker and as human being.' Others labelled the firm a soulless slavedriver whose working conditions were the 'negation of humanity.' These themes of deindividuation, autocratic control and the 'robotisation' of the workforce were neatly summarised by the *Saturday Review*, which argued 'his system marked the beginning of what is so terrifyingly depicted in *Brave New World*.'[23]

Nevertheless, utopianism was badly needed. By 1925, Lloyd George's promise 'to make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in' looked less an act of political hyperbole and more a complete miscalculation on the part of economic liberalism to reconstruct Britain.[24] By 1929, at least one in ten were out of work.[25] In Britain's overcrowded slums, want, disease, squalor, ignorance and idleness (later, William Beveridge's 'five giants') reigned supreme. Meanwhile, the communist experiment in the east was, so sympathetic travellers claimed, steadily realising

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[20] *Birmingham Daily Gazette* (13 July 1932), 11; B. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), 125.
[21] *Daily Herald* (23 January 1933); *Times* (18 July 1933).
[22] *Framlingham Weekly News* (13 February 1932).
[23] *The Graphic* (23 January 1932); *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* (13 July 1932); *Larne Times* (16 July 1932); *Saturday Review* (16 July 1932).
[24] *The Times* (25 November 1918).
[25] James Denman and Paul McDonald, 'Unemployment statistics from 1881 to the present day', *Labour Market Trends* 104 (1996), 6.

utopia. Even before the uncritical and glowing accounts of Russia offered by George Bernard Shaw and Beatrice and Sidney Webb reached Britain in the early 1930s, trade unionists were returning and claiming victory for Bolshevism.[26] Three months before Walter Crittall's vision was outlined, in September 1925, the Trades Union Congress passed a resolution empowering it to call a General Strike, which crippled the nation eight months later. The strike was an unprecedented display of working-class solidarity and proved class conflict on a national scale could penetrate the nation's seemingly not-so-green-and-pleasant land. Throughout Britain, alternatives to liberal capitalism were being championed. Although the likelihood of violent revolution (at least after 1921) was small, what first appeared a muted chattering threatened to develop into a crescendo if not adequately challenged.[27] By the time East Tilbury was constructed, economic liberalism was in full retreat. It was a painful divorce for a nation whose identity had long been defined by free trade and small government, while in Thurrock a sustained agricultural slump and a fall in dock work had contributed to high levels of joblessness and poverty. Faith in liberalism's gospel of inevitable progress seemed to have shuddered to a halt.[28] Capitalism needed to realise its own utopia.

On the surface, East Tilbury and Silver End seemed to fulfil this need. Partly in response to the sharp decline in Britain's economic pre-eminence on the world stage, but mainly due to the impact of urbanisation and class conflict, many across the political spectrum envisioned revolutionising society through deurbanisation. Organisations like the Garden City Association and 'New Townsmen' advocated the resettling of hundreds of thousands of urban dwellers

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[26] George Bernard Shaw and Harry Geduld (ed.), *The Rationalisation of Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1964, original 1932); Beatrice Webb and Sidney Webb, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1936).

[27] For a summary of British politics in 1926 and 1927, see *Whitaker's Almanack 1926* (1925), 449-55, 803-813 and *Whitaker's Almanack 1927* (1926), 814-44. A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Pelican, 1975), 308-16.

[28] *Chelmsford Chronicle* (18 August 1933), 5; Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, 86-141; Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 106-40.

into 100 new satellite towns, plans which were initially embraced by the Labour Party but went unheeded until after 1945. Instead, municipal governments and private developers built vast (often unplanned) suburbs. Political actors wanted to revive village life, which was widely thought to symbolise the ideal cross-class , harmonious society; an opportunity thought squandered when ex-servicemen were not resettled on the land.[29] Similarly, after the war influential modernist architects like Walter Gropius (1883-1969) believed functionalism and planning could create a 'heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith.'[30]

Both villages also spoke to this widespread yearning to return to the land. On both the political right and left a nostalgia for the supposed harmony of pre-industrial village life revealed itself through the popularity of, for example, the Scout movement.[31] An extensive and often cult-like anti-urbanism developed and some factions, like the hard right within the Conservative Party, advocated a ruralisation of society that would have seen the return of a semi-feudal economy.[32] At 'Fordson Estate' in Essex (Boreham, near Chelmsford) a small, agricultural, capitalist utopian experiment was attempted by Henry Ford and Conservative MP Percival Perry. As Kit Kowol has demonstrated, they fused modern technology, paternalism, profit-sharing and welfare capitalism in search of 'a conservative utopia for an imagined "modern" age' that attempted to endow the working class with a fervour for capitalism. As at East Tilbury

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[29] John Boughton, *Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing* (Verso, 2018), 40, 76; Andrezej Olechnowicz, *Working-Class Housing in England between the Wars: The Becontree Estate* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), 18, 138-45; Guy Ortolano, *Thatcher's Progress: From Social Democracy to Market Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2019), 10.

[30] Quoted in Felipe Loureiro, 'The Revolutionary Mind of Walter Gropius: Architectural Utopias for the Machine Age', *Utopian Studies* 25:1 (2014), 181.

[31] Bernhard Dietz, 'Countryside-versus-City in European Thought: German and British Anti-Urbanism between the Wars', *The European Legacy* 13:7 (2008), 801-814.

[32] Bernhard Dietz, *Neo-Tories: The Revolt of British Conservatives against Democracy and Political Modernity* (Bloomsbury, 2018), 68.

and Silver End, this social dreaming did 'not position itself as an escape or alternative to modern commercial society' but a utopian reimagining of it.[33] Other groups, like the newly established Industrial Welfare Society and some Conservative politicians, promoted the creation of 'model industrial villages' as a panacea to the nation's acute housing shortage and labour unrest, which was thought to ensure a 'contented people.'[34] These settlements in Essex would come to encapsulate all these forces for potential utopian transformation after the war, to varying degrees. Unlike socially exclusive suburbia, they were self-contained, cross-class communities with 'all the advantages of a town, without, we trust, many of the drawbacks', as Francis Crittall put it.[35] In 1935 around 2,000 of Silver End's 2,500 residents (80%) were described as 'ordinary working class', which accurately reflected the class makeup of Britain between the wars.[36]

Essex was seemingly the perfect location for such ambitious plans, too, but also the county most in need of it. From the Salvation Army colony at Hadleigh Farm, to experimental socialist societies and even a Tolstoy anarchist community, the county had provided refuge and escape for centuries; a space for freedom, innovation and unconventional living.[37] In the first half of the twentieth century, particularly in the 1920s, it was home to around 20,000 self-built 'plotlands' erected by working-class Londoners: for a small amount of money, families could create their own libertarian enclaves in the county.[38] However, a decade earlier it all seemed

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[33] Kit Kowol, 'An Experiment in Conservative Modernity: Interwar Conservatism and Henry Ford's English Farms', *Journal of British Studies* 55:106 (2016), 781-805.
[34] Annie Hall, 'Housing for Industrial Workers', *The Journal of Industrial Welfare* 2 (1920), 254-57; Robert Fitzgerald, *British Labour Management and Industrial Welfare, 1846-1939* (Croom Helm, 1988), 230-31.
[35] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 124.
[36] *Braintree and Witham Times* (28 February, 14 March 1935); Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 106.
[37] Gillian Darley, *Excellent Essex* (Exeter: Old Street Publishing, 2019); Joe Hill *et al.*, *Radical Essex* (Southend: Cornerhouse, 2018).
[38] Dennis Hardy and Colin Ward, *Arcadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2004).

less rosy. When the father of science fiction, H.G. Wells, visited Francis Crittall's hometown of Braintree in 1916 he painted a stark warning for the future of Britain in peacetime. He saw nothing of inspiration in this town in perpetual and petty conflict, one of small-minded and pessimistic people. He was convinced if private enterprise was to dictate the nation's reconstruction then 'there will be bloodshed on the streets and the chasing of rulers': a liberal capitalist reconstruction would simply bring 'insurrection and revolution.'[39] No doubt he would have been surprised when Francis set out to create a capitalist utopia just a few miles from the town.

[39] H.G. Wells, *What is Coming? A European Forecast* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 76-95.

Image 1.1: Silver End pictured from the north-west (1948, Britain From the Air. Image (EAW018562) is not subject to Open Access licence terms. For permission to use (EAW018562) please contact Historic Environment Scotland)

Although neither company fully succeeded in creating its 'garden city', both went a long way to achieving it. At Silver End (Image 1.1), the factory, department store, farms, school, village hall, sporting and recreational facilities, hotel, restaurant, two churches and 476 of the 500 homes planned were all completed by 1932, but the cinema, hospital, law court, swimming

pool and bath houses were never built.[40] In constructing it, Francis declaring himself 'a minister for change and revolution.'[41] Similarly, when construction finished on East Tilbury (Image 1.2) in 1966, 362 houses had been completed, plus two hostels and a five-story 'Community House', which accommodated 370 people and containing shops, a ballroom, gymnasium, canteen and restaurant. Most of the village, however, was built before the early 1940s, which by then also had three five-storey factories and five single-storey workshops, a railway station, a 350-seat cinema, a swimming pool, tennis courts, private elementary school, technical college and generous sporting facilities. Rare for company villages, both firms also attempted self-sufficiency, and had market gardens, dairy farms, large volumes of livestock and hundreds of acres under food cultivation.[42] Yet, despite their 'utopian' appeal, both these isolated villages also advanced less palatable aspects of liberal capitalism. In both, the company was the absolute monarch. Seemingly benevolent, the settlements were also hegemonic experiments in social engineering where capitalists harnessed incredible control over residents. Not only did the companies monopolise employment and housing, but also owned or managed utilities, recreation, education, healthcare, welfare and social security, shops, restaurants, farms and employees' financial savings. Residents claimed they never had to leave, and some went for weeks without doing so.[43] A corporate consciousness was brazenly nurtured through paternalism, patronage and community building. At Silver End, residents lived under the shadow of Francis and Ellen Crittall's palatial home and the towering department store, which sold branded 'Silver End' products. At East Tilbury, the multi-storey factories and Community House, floodlit and emblazoned with the Bata logo, loomed over the landscape for miles. A

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[40] Graham Thurgood, 'Silver End Garden Village, 1926-1932', *Thirties Society Journal* 3 (1983), 36-42.
[41] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 122.
[42] Silver End Development Company, *Souvenir from the Opening of the Village Hall* (Essex, 1928), 17-18; Joanna Smith*, East Tilbury, Essex: Historic Area Appraisal* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2007), 19-20.
[43] Susan King, *Silver End: Voices from the Guv'nor's Village* (Witham: Workers' Education Association, 1996), 13.

tied-cottage system ensured further acquiescence: failure to conform not only meant the loss of a job, but also a house, a community, healthcare, welfare and education. Residents of these villages were incorporated into the company brand. Community consciousness was defined purely by the companies as the sole employers, property owners and retailers. In this light, the social dreaming that gave birth to these towns was significantly dimmed, and these deeply hierarchical societies seemed less an enlightened arcadia but a form of neo-feudalism. The companies' autocratic control would eventually come to be challenged by residents, with sometimes violent results. As one journalist put it in 1952: 'far from being a paradise [...] [East Tilbury] looks like a camp in which the inmates, in return for certain comforts, have to dedicate their bodies and their souls to the sacred cause of Bata's profits.'[44]

[44] Malcolm MacEwen, *The Bata Story* (Essex, 1952), 7.

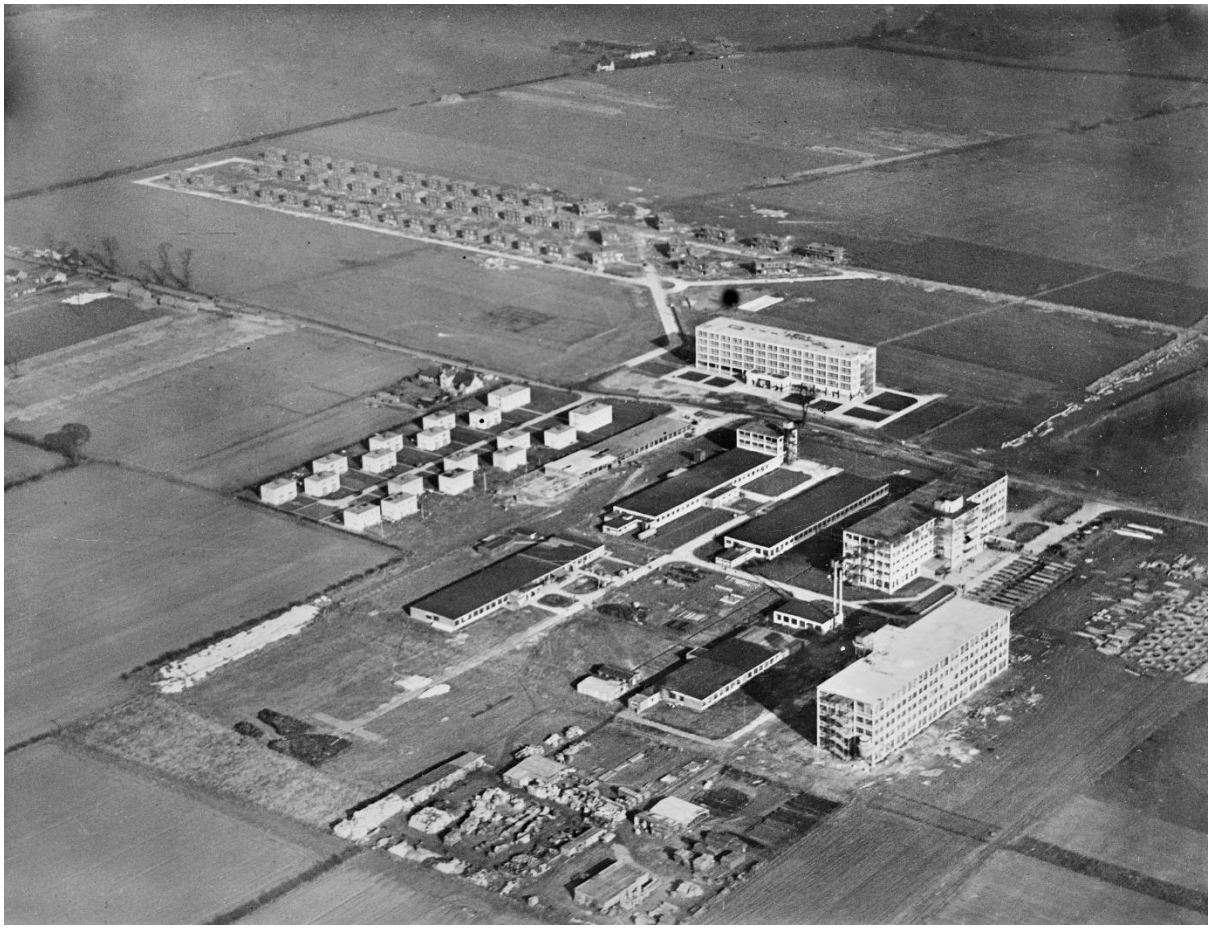

Image 1.2: East Tilbury, taken while under construction in 1937 (Britain From the Air Image (EPW052437) is not subject to Open Access licence terms. For permission to use (EPW052437) please contact Historic Environment Scotland)

These villages were therefore a smorgasbord of contradictions from conception to realisation. The quintessential depiction of the English village, which had been so strong in the national consciousness following the scientifically enabled savagery of the First World War, was outright rejected. The archetypal image of a small community of agricultural workers and independent producers, whose lives were dominated by the pub and church, was comprehensively rejected. While they promoted the conservative, community-spirited and family-orientated ideals of rural England, they also broke heavily with this tradition. The squire was replaced by the company, the priest by welfare capitalism, civic institutions by corporate buildings, a secular philosophy substituted religion, and artificial community-building replaced organic, unplanned evolution. On the one hand, their vision of healthy, active and isolated rural life was at home

with the nostalgia of many nineteenth-century reformers; on the other, they actively disassociated themselves with the past and championed modernity. British Bata and the CMC built their business empires on competition and praised it as a means of universal human progress, yet established omnipotent economic monopolies in these communities. They praised individual liberty and private property, but operated systems of hegemonic control and owned all property. They lauded the self-made man and upward social mobility, yet grew wealthy through 'scientific management' and banned residents from operating their own businesses. They praised individuality, but attempted to develop a collective consciousness in support of the business. And they critiqued capitalism while simultaneously trying to perfect it from the inside. Ultimately, these contradictions brought about the end of the utopian projects and the rise of an altogether different social dreaming.

Capitalist Utopianism: 'Invisible as a Utopia'

Since the turn of the century academics from a variety of fields and political leanings have urged us to remember that the triumph of liberal capitalism has not meant the 'end of history.'[45] Capitalism's portrayal as an objective science in many academic fields, especially economics, has experienced a backlash which intensified after the global financial crisis of 2007-8. The assumption that capitalism was a value-neutral and 'natural' state of affairs was alarmingly common. James Buchanan (1919-2013), the US economist and Nobel Laureate, mourned the loss of classical liberalism's 'soul' in 2000, claiming the fall of communism had relegated the work of economists and social scientists to career-building 'piddling puzzle-

[45] For example, Howard Williams, 'The End of History in Hegel and Marx', *The European Legacy* 2:3 (1997), 557-66; Geoffrey Hodgson, *Economics and Utopia: Why the Learning Economy is Not the End of History* (Routledge, 2002), in response to Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

solving.' As economists and social scientists abandoned the 'aesthetic-ethical-ideological' moorings that underpinned the 'philosophical science', Buchanan argued, the western 'non-scientific community' lost touch with the liberal (now neoliberal) idealism that governed western societies.[46] The result was that for decades the study of pluralist economics within social sciences has been overlooked in search of scientific rigour and unquestioned 'truths.' Following the financial crash, attempts were made to rectify this, and societies for economic pluralism were formed at universities throughout Britain.[47] In recent years, we have witnessed a host of work exploring the future of capitalism and the beliefs that sustain it, some of which (for example, Thomas Piketty) envision the potential for a reformed capitalist eutopia via stringent wealth taxes.[48] These works stress the need to understand capitalism through the ideologies and philosophies that justify it and ensure people's consent or enthusiasm.

When Buchanan wrote of the 'soul' of classical liberalism he was referring to a vision of utopian capitalism which is typically thought to have started with Adam Smith (1723-1790). Buchanan saw in US Republican politicians a veiled capitalist utopianism that echoed Adam Smith's belief in a 'simple system of natural liberty' that promised 'universal opulence' for all.[49] After 1850 the optimism of figures like Adam Smith, Jean-Baptiste Say (1767-1832) and Frédéric Bastiat (1801-1850), who championed the boundless opportunities and social progress that limited government and an entrepreneurial economy offered, was dimmed and heavily qualified.

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[46] James Buchanan, 'The Soul of Classical Liberalism', *The Independent Review* 5:1 (2000), 111-119.

[47] Christian Arnsperger and Yanis Varoufakis, 'What is Neoclassical Economics? The three axioms responsible for its theoretical oeuvre, practical irrelevance and, thus, discursive power', *Paneconomicus* 53:1 (2006), 5-18; Joe Earle, Cahal Moran and Zach Ward-Perkins, *The Econocracy: On the Perils of Leaving Economics to the Experts* (Penguin, 2017); 'Rethinking Capitalism', (http://www.rethinkeconomics.org/, accessed 1 June 2020).

[48] For example, David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (Profile, 2015); Paul Mason, *PostCapitalism: A Guide to Our Future* (Penguin, 2016); Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Harvard UP, 2017), 663-99; Wolfgang Streeck, *How Will Capitalism End? Essays on a Failing System* (Verso, 2016). For a critique, see Francesco Boldizzoni, *Foretelling the End of Capitalism: Intellectual Misadventures Since Karl Marx* (Harvard UP, 2020).

[49] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations Volume I* (New York: JM Dent, 1957, original 1776), 10.

Other liberal thinkers like Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), David Ricardo (1772-1823) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) shifted away from wealth generation and the supposed harmony of class interests, and emphasised conflict, inequality and the persistence of poverty.[50]

As such, since the mid-nineteenth century capitalism has generally been disassociated with utopianism. It is widely assumed that utopianism, which is primarily employed to criticise existing society, is exclusively advocated by the political left, and is therefore often used to discredit left-wing arguments through an 'annihilation by labels', as Martin Buber put it.[51] As Peter Fitting has argued, for scholars of utopianism (usually on the left) the existence of right-wing social dreaming 'poses a dilemma' as its rejection of egalitarianism has meant academics have deliberately excluded 'elitist, sexist or racist' utopias despite their obvious existence, and because such works usually bolsters the status quo.[52] The political right usually disassociates itself from social dreaming not only because it claims to deal in empirical evidence and 'scientific' research, but also because utopia suggests existing capitalist society is somehow inadequate.[53] Utopianism is therefore presented as the left-wing politics of fantasy. It poses a challenge to what Mark Fisher called 'capitalist realism': the sense that the political economy is 'natural' and 'free from sentimental delusions.' It is presented as dealing with universal human 'instincts' including selfishness, enterprise, competition and self-preservation, and therefore 'capitalist utopianism' is simply seen as oxymoronic. For the right 'there is no alternative', as Margaret Thatcher once put it; and on the left, inequality, economic

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[50] Buchanan, 'Soul of Classical Liberalism', 113-18; Mark Skousen, *The Big Three in Economics: Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and John Maynard Keynes* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), 50-63.
[51] Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 6; Lyman Tower Sargent, 'Capitalist Eutopias in America', in Kenneth Roemer (ed.), *America as Utopia* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1981), 192, 202.
[52] Peter Fitting, 'Utopias Beyond Our Ideals: The Dilemma of the Right-Wing Utopia', *Utopian Studies* 2 (1991), 95-96.
[53] Gregory Claeys, *Searching for Utopia: The History of an Idea* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2011), 8-10.

depressions and class conflict, the three seemingly immoveable caveats to capitalism's promise of universal prosperity, hardly seem to embody the zenith of human existence.[54]

Between the wars, leading capitalists and Conservative politicians presented liberal capitalism as timeless and rational. In parliamentary debates capitalism was thought to harness 'human nature' and fulfil 'innermost desires', where socialism was 'unnatural.' It had existed 'in all countries for all times' according to Sir Alfred Mond, 'characterising the whole history of humanity from its earliest start.'[55] This view was strengthened immediately after the First World War by Ludwig von Mises' powerful 'socialist calculation debate', which maintained only markets could adequately govern systems of monetary prices; this argument was pounced upon by British authors and used to discredit alternative political economies.[56] Numerous influential bodies were established after the war by economic and political elites to improve capitalism's 'tarnished' image and present socialism as 'unnatural'; from employers' organisations like the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations (1919), to political bodies like the Anti-Socialist Union (revived 1918), Middle Class Union (1919) and the powerful but shadowy Economic League (1919).[57] Today, even scholars who accept capitalism contains 'science fictions' and 'design fantasies' – from the claim economists deal in 'iron laws' to the fiction of predictive business plans and risk models – usually stop short of claiming these elements are 'utopian.' Nonetheless, as William Davies maintains, 'capitalism rests on the

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[54] Mark Fisher, 'Foreword' in William Davies (ed.), *Economic Science Fictions* (Goldsmiths Press, 2018); *Capitalist Realism: Is there No Alternative?* (Hampshire: O Books, 2009), 2-16. For a contemporary discussion on liberalism's failings see William Beveridge, 'The Economic Implications of Planning Under Socialism', in Beveridge, *Planning Under Socialism and Other Addresses* (Longman, 1936), 2-31.

[55] House of Commons 161:2473-2512 (20 March 1923); 309:2216-2278 (11 March 1936, https://hansard.parliament.uk).

[56] Hartley Withers, *The Case for Capitalism* (New York: Dutton, 1920), 22-42; William Davis, 'The Return of Social Government: From "Socialist Calculation" to "Social Analytics"', *European Journal of Social Theory* 18:4 (2015), 431-50.

[57] Arthur McIvor, '"A Crusade for Capitalism": The Economic League, 1919-1939', *Journal of Contemporary History* 23:4 (1988), 633-35.

traffic between the imaginary; it's not just that "all that is solid melts into air", but that air is constantly materialising into solidity.'[58]

Capitalist dystopias and anti-utopias have been far more common within English-language literature. Historically, this form of critique has found shape with exponents of radical alternative philosophies and, perhaps most stinging and galvanising within a British context, through social commentaries like Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) and George Orwell's multiple non-fiction works including *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937).[59] Fictional forms of anti-capitalist literature predate these further still; John Minter Morgan's *Revolt of the Bees* (1826) and Harriet Grover's *The New Political Economy* (1828) both used the metaphor of a colony of bees choosing private enterprise to highlight the disastrous consequences of the system, including starvation and war in the former.[60] North American authors echoed similar critiques later in the century, like Thomas Wharton Collins' *The Eden of Labour* (1876). A surge in American dystopian fiction from the 1890s warned that unfettered capitalism was destroying the political and social fabric of the nation. Thomas Proctor's *A Banker's Dream: A Fiction* (1895) and George Hastings' *The First American King* (1904) were followed by the prolific Jack London, whose short stories and novel *The Iron Heel* (1907) depicted dystopian worlds where the working class was enslaved, the middle class was destroyed and oligarchies of capitalists replaced democracy.[61]

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[58] Jens Beckert, *Imagined Futures: Fictional Expectations and Capitalist Dynamics* (Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2016); Davies, 'Introduction to Economic Science Fictions'; and Ha-Joon Chang, 'Economics, Science Fiction, History and Comparative Studies' in Davies (ed.), *Economic Science Fictions*, 23-25, 31-40.

[59] Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845, first English edition New York: Lovell, 1887); George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (Victor Gollancz, 1933); *The Road to Wigan Pier* (Victor Gollancz, 1937). See also Margery Spring Rice, *Working Class Wives: Their Health and Conditions* (Penguin, 1939).

[60] John Minter Morgan, *Revolt of the Bees* (Longman, 1826); Harriet Grover, *The New Political Economy of the Honey Bee* (Exeter, 1828).

[61] Thomas Wharton Collins, *The Eden of Labour* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey, 1876); Thomas Proctor, *A Banker's Dream: A Fiction* (New Jersey: Progressive Books, 1895); George Hastings, *The First American King* (New York: Smart Set, 1904); Jack London, *The Iron Heel* (New York: Macmillan, 1907). I am indebted to Lyman Tower

Between the wars there was also a continued outpouring of English-language capitalist dystopias. Charles Montague's *Right Off the Map* (1927) perfectly encapsulates many of these criticisms: set in a deeply unequal and segregated society where a tiny minority of rich individuals lived in suburban paradise, feudalism had returned masquerading as democratic republicanism, as all but the wealthiest could vote and private monopolies in industry and the media allowed a weapons manufacturer to start a war for profit. Montague created a world in which social engineering was guised as paternalism, monopolies created autocratic control and democracy masked a corporatocracy.[62] Other art forms echoed these warnings. Northern Irish playwright Charles Duff's science fiction satire *Mind Products Limited* (1932) portrayed the world of 1960, where drugs were used by capitalists-cum-dictators to control human behaviour and maximise production.[63] Capitalism's tendency towards monopoly and concentrated wealth was often used to portray an authoritarian future; if not strictly dystopian, it was anti-utopian as the 'utopia' was enjoyed solely by a small and powerful elite. As such, the corporation (or mega-corporation) tends to feature heavily in dystopian literature and is usually painted as an omnipotent and omnipresent enforcer of social control.[64]

Despite these more plentiful texts, capitalist utopianism has also existed in literary, communitarian and theoretical forms, but very few scholars have explored the topic. After the mid-nineteenth century capitalist utopianism was not lost; it was merely less conspicuous. As Slavoj Žižek has argued, while liberal capitalism may appear 'scientific', 'common sense' or

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Sargent's online bibliography for most of this literature: *Utopian Literature in English: An Annotated Bibliography from 1516 to the Present* (http://pcspilot.vmhost.psu.edu/utopia/, accessed 1 June 2020).

[62] Charles Montague, *Right Off The Map* (Penguin, 1927). See also Ernst Charles Large, *Sugar in the Air: A Romance* (Jonathan Cape, 1937). For US literature see John Hultberg, *Dead Men's Shoes or The One Hundred Per Cent Inheritance Tax* (New York: Dent, 1920); Gilbert Stevenson, *A Model State: Making a Utopia of California* (Santa Monica, 1934).

[63] Charles Duff, *Mind Products Limited* (The Hague: Servire Press, 1932).

[64] Laura Horn, 'Future Incorporated?', in Davies (ed.), *Economic Science Fictions*, 41-46.

'natural', it is often an 'ideology in its purest form'; imitating natural sciences and masquerading as value-free objectivism.[65] Utopianism lurks beneath the surface, but is rarely studied. This may be, in part, due to the fact scholars of utopianism and of capitalism typically have very different academic traditions, as Niklas Luhmann noted. Nonetheless, Luhmann believed it was possible to merge these traditions if capitalism was thought of ideologically and historically. Utopianism has been used to legitimise the political economy, but this social dreaming rarely 'reveals itself' and is 'invisible as a utopia.'[66]

Frederic Jameson, too, has questioned whether right-wing (and fascist) idealism can 'embody a properly utopian impulse.' He concluded that 'even hegemonic or ruling-class culture and ideology are utopian', as they 'legitimise a given power structure […] and generate specific forms of false consciousness.' Jameson points to the work of Ernst Bloch to support this conclusion, who argued that 'utopian impulses' were present in 'the crudest forms of cultural manipulation', such as advertising slogans.[67] In recent years there has been a re-emergence of capitalist utopianism on the American libertarian right. Political economist Jason Brennan, heavily influenced by the right-wing libertarianism of Robert Nozick, constructed his own capitalist utopian world (a 'voluntaryist, anarchist, capitalist, libertarian […] laissez-faire, market-society utopia') to demonstrate that utopianism was not exclusively owned by the political left, and argued that if humans were morally 'perfect' utopian capitalism would still be superior to utopian socialism.[68] Similarly Ralph Benko and William Collier have called for a

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[65] Slavoj Žižek, 'The Secret Clauses of Liberal Utopia', *Law Critique* 19:1 (2008), 1-18; *Living in the End Times* (Verso, 2011), 1-19, 35-49.
[66] N. Luhmann, 'Kapitalismus und Utopie', *Merkur-Deutsche Zeitschrift Fur Europaisches Denken* 540 (1994), 189-197.
[67] Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Oxford: Routledge, 2002), 278-84.
[68] Jason Brennan, *Why Not Capitalism?* (New York: Routledge, 2014). See R. Nozick, *Anarchy State and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

utopian reimagining of capitalism in response to the growing popularity of socialism in the USA.[69] They were particularly influenced by Friedrich Hayek's (1899-1992) appeal, in 1949, to rediscover 'a liberal utopia […] a truly liberal radicalism.'[70] Regarding architecture, utopian competitions that ask for 'radically creative, yet mature' proposals, sponsored by anarcho-capitalists, continue to fuse architectural innovation and capitalist utopianism in Britain.[71] In politics, five newly elected Conservative MPs outlined their own low-tax, small-state capitalist eutopianism in the 2012 book *Britannia Unchained*. Three subsequently backed Britain's withdrawal from the EU in 2016, and as of June 2020 held ministerial positions in Boris Johnson's government, including Home Secretary (Priti Patel), First Secretary of State (Dominic Raab) and Business (Kwasi Kwarteng).[72] What might be 'invisible' is nonetheless powerful.

By utopianism, I mean the social dreaming expressed by individuals or groups seeking a different and plausibly better society, which provides solutions to social and political problems, and not the realisation of the 'perfect' society. Although most social dreaming envisions a radically different world, this is not always the case and many people dream of something akin to their existing society, as is the case with most English-language capitalist utopian literature. These are expressed, as Lyman Tower Sargent has outlined, through the 'three faces of utopianism': utopian literature, intentional societies and utopian social theory. In this regard, East Tilbury and Silver End were not only intentional communities but also a confluence of social dreaming found in political philosophy, urban planning and architecture. Liberal capitalism has utopian examples within all three faces, but in smaller quantities than socialist

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[69] Ralph Benko and William Collier, *The Capitalist Manifesto* (Ebook: Capitalist League, 2019).
[70] F. Hayek, 'The Intellectuals and Socialism', *The University of Chicago Law Review* (1949), 417-433.
[71] Paul Finch, 'Patrik Schumacher's utopia design contest won't be about architecture' (9 June 2020, https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/opinion/patrik-schumachers-utopia-design-contest-wont-be-about-architecture/10047269.article, accessed 9 June 2020).
[72] Kwasi Kwarteng *et al.*, *Britannia Unchained: Global Lessons for Growth and Prosperity* (Springer, 2012).

and other communitarian philosophies.[73] They may exist as static or dynamic (changing) forms, but capitalist utopias are 'regimes of abundance' rather than 'ascetic' communities (which accept scarcity and embrace simplicity). Utopianism – and the closely-related eutopianism, or social dreaming for a considerably better civilisation – is therefore the expression of a plausible idealism, which sets it apart from the purely science fiction. The ideal civilisation is not merely a dream, myth or fantasy, but a reality to be actively pursued and realised. Utopianism 'explores the space between the possible and the impossible', as Greg Claeys puts it.[74] As such, I will incorporate all three 'faces' throughout the thesis, although literature will feature less prominently.

Some scholars have explored the existence of capitalist utopianism or eutopianism in literature, however. According to Sargent, this literature is a 'significant subgenre', even when excluding the 'hundreds' of socialist dystopias, but have been overlooked by scholars because they are in a minority of utopian texts. Sargent identified 51 English-language American works published between 1836 and 1973, and Howard Segal discovered ten between 1900 and 1949, and another 47 that incorporated private enterprise.[75] These may differ by degrees, such as 'marginal' or 'reformist' utopias, 'libertarian' or 'apocalyptic' dreaming – as categorised by Peter Fitting – but generally share key themes including a commitment to private property, a rejection of equality, selective and exclusive (or elitist) visions of society, the promotion of individualism over collectivism and laissez-faire economies. Usually, the functions of modern governments are performed by private companies. Most also tend to be undemocratic and

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[73] Lyman Tower Sargent, 'Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited', *Utopian Studies* 5:1 (1994), 1-27.
[74] Claeys, *Searching for Utopia*, 11-15, 144; Frank Manuel and Fritzie Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 4-10.
[75] Sargent, 'Capitalist Eutopias in America', and Howard Segal, 'Utopia Diversified: 1900-1949' in Roemer (ed.), *America as Utopia*, 193-205, 333-349.

patriarchal (written with white, male protagonists), and some also incorporate elements of eugenics or Social Darwinism. Nevertheless, they remain a vehicle for critique and usually take aim at elements within existing capitalist societies, particularly the role of government, to transform the status quo rather than replace it.[76]

As with all utopian thought based on a common philosophy or ideology, capitalist utopianism has collective principles and aims, but is also an evolutionary idealism that reflects and challenges historically contingent issues. Socialist utopianism may share common yearnings for economic emancipation, common ownership, social equality and (usually) communal living with limits on private property, but shared motivations do not result in identical visions, and the same is true of capitalist utopianism. Just as Margrie's idealism differed from Adam Smith's, and Friedrich Hayek's from Ayn Rand's, liberal capitalist utopianism nonetheless shares three principles which will be discussed in chapter one. As multiple capitalisms can exist, I will say here that 'capitalism' is defined minimally as an economic and political system where the means of production are primarily owned by private individuals with the imperative of unlimited capital accumulation by legal means. Capital is circulated by reinvestment with the view to derive further profit. However, it should be noted that I will deal primarily with liberal capitalism throughout the thesis, which is characterised by private enterprise operating within an international system of free trade, free markets and limited government intervention.[77]

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[76] Fitting, 'Right-Wing Utopia', 95-109; Sargent, 'Capitalist Eutopias in America', 192-205.
[77] Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (Verso, 2005), 4-8.

Forgotten Utopias

Unlike Bournville, New Earswick, Port Sunlight or Saltaire, East Tilbury and Silver End are not large suburbs or settlements near cities with research-intensive universities. Nor were they made famous by erroneous claims to the birthplace of British socialism, like New Lanark.[78] East Tilbury, situated in a windswept part of the Thames Estuary, is six miles from the nearest town of Grays, and ten miles from the nearest large town of Basildon. Few people venture there. Even in 1964, when British Bata was the largest exporter of shoes in Britain, local resident Angela Rumsey wrote that 'it is still incredible that a large amount of people, perhaps living only three miles away, have never actually seen the estate in thirty years.' Even fewer travel to this part of post-industrial England today; especially after the factory was closed in 1997 and the company folded in 2006.[79] Most of the factory buildings are unoccupied. It is hard to imagine that a utopian project was even attempted in this isolated spot, encircled by marshland, a landfill site and a disused sewage works. Although Zlín has received a considerable amount of academic attention few have taken interest in Bata's obscure English 'colony.'[80] What limited research exists is confined to the village's architectural significance, aesthetics and construction.[81] Henry Ford was the only other employer before the Second World War who attempted to remodel capitalism by constructing numerous 'model' settlements, but while Ford's attempts – which were also international in scope – have been well documented, Bata's 18 company towns and dozens more factories have received little

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[78] Ophélie Siméon, *Robert Owen's Experiment at New Lanark* (Palgrave, 2017), 142-43.

[79] Angela Rumsey, *The Origin and Development of the Bata Factory and Estate* (Thurrock: Bata Heritage Centre, 1964); Smith, 'Bata Estate', 55.

[80] For example, Tomas Kasper and Dana Kasperova, 'The Bata Company in Zlín: a shoe company or a school company?' *History of Education* 47:34 (2018), 321-48; Katrin Klingan and Kerstin Gust (eds.), *A Utopia of Modernity, Zlín: Revisiting Bata's Functional City* (Berlon: Jovis, 2009); Helen Meller, *European Cities 1890-1930s: History, Culture and the Built Environment* (Chichester: Wiley, 2001), 117-145; Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 33–73; Barbara Vacková and Lucie Galčanová, 'The Project Zlín: Everyday Life in a Materialized Utopia', *Urban People* 11:2 (2009), 311-37.

[81] Jane Pavitt, 'The Bata Project: A Social and Industrial Experiment', *Twentieth Century Architecture* 1 (1994), 31-44; Smith, *East Tilbury Appraisal*; 'Bata Estate.'

academic attention.[82] Except for Ondřej Ševeček and Martin Jemelka's 2013 edited collection, *Company Towns of the Bata Concern*, little is known of these 'colonies.'[83]

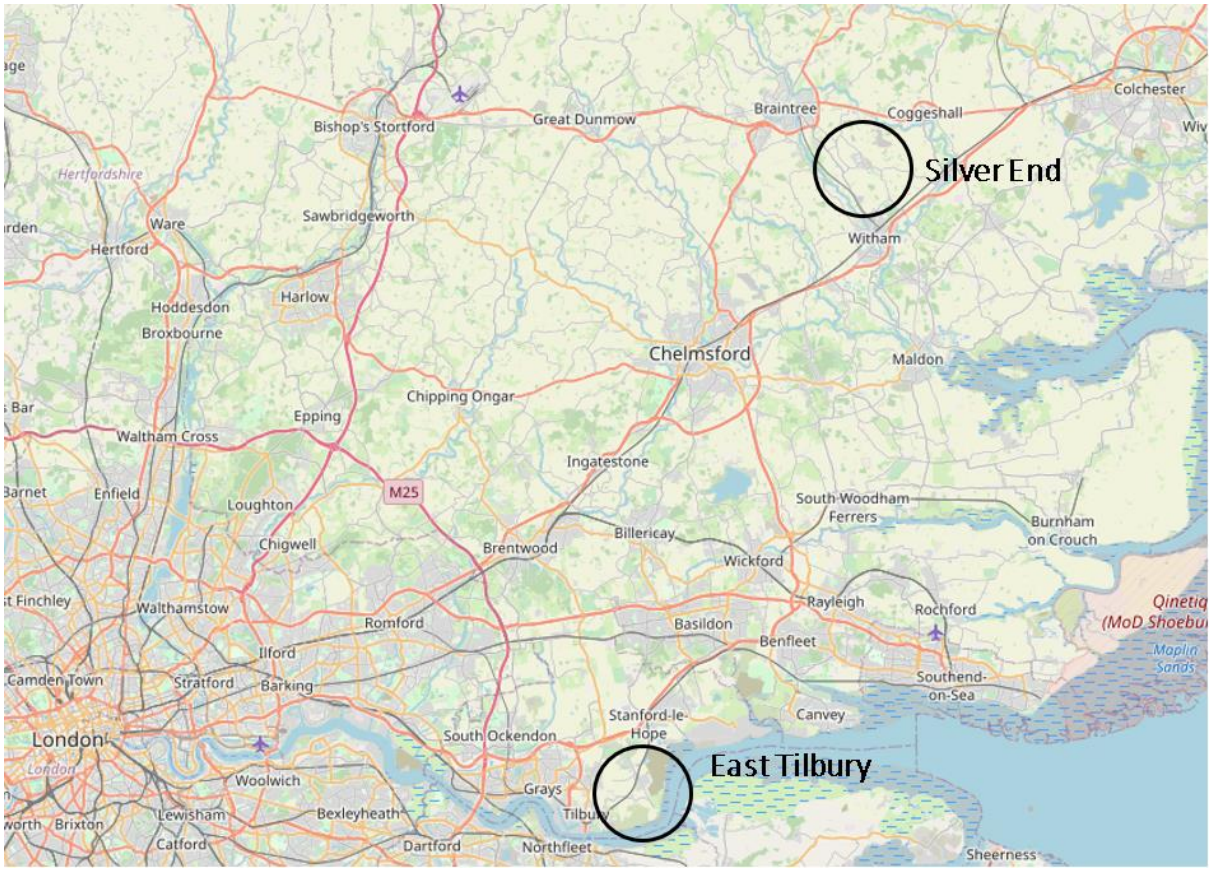

Image 1.3: Locations of East Tilbury and Silver End (OpenStreetMap contributors)

Between the wars the Bata enterprise received plenty of attention from governments and the press, but the company was largely lost to historians following the nationalisation of its headquarters at Zlín after the Second World War. Between 1949 and 1990, the city was renamed Gottwaldov and Bata's influence was erased from its official historical memory. Since the fall of the Eastern Bloc scholars have again taken interest in the company and the ideological conflict it raised between utopianism and refined exploitation. While research has unsurprisingly focused on Zlín, localised studies of Bata communities in Eastern Europe, France,

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83 Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 9, 35.

Canada and the US have also emerged.[84] Since 1990, a body of pro-Bata literature has also emerged, usually by former directors of the firm, which paint it as a benevolent advocate of welfare capitalism akin to Henry Ford.[85] But outside of some interest in East Tilbury's architecture, Bata's influence in England has largely been neglected by scholars and no extensive study of the village exists.[86] It is still the case, as architectural writer Ian Nairn wrote in 1964, that it is an 'extraordinary' settlement 'that somehow never got the notice it deserves.'[87] Even Ševeček and Jemelka's *Company Towns* only briefly mentions it, but this is surprising given East Tilbury's centrality to the Bata enterprise. By 1939, it was the largest Bata 'colony' outside Czechoslovakia and employed over 1,500 people, producing around 3 million pairs of shoes a year.[88] Thomas Bata – Tomas' only son and the future head of the firm – had been educated in England and was deputy manager at East Tilbury between 1936 and 1939. It was the most profitable arm of the company in the 1940s and after the war was named its head office.[89]

As the only other interwar working-class estate built in a modernistic style, the very limited number of studies on Silver End have also primarily focused on the village's architectural

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[84] Ševeček, 'Introductory remarks' in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 15-29. See Alain Gatti, *Chausser les hommes qui vont pieds nus: Bata-Hellocourt, 1931–2001* (Metz: Serpenoise, 2004); Bohumil Lehár, 'The Economic Expansion of the Bata Concern in Czechoslovakia and Abroad, 1929–1938' *Historica* 5 (1963), 147–188; Carmichael Larry, *Bata Belcamp: The Story of the Bata Shoe Company in Harford County Maryland 1932-2000* (Maryland: Carmichael Enterprises, 2013).

[85] Thomas Bata and Sonja Sinclair, *Bata: Shoemaker to the World* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1990*);* Anthony Cekota*, Entrepreneur Extraordinary: The Biography of Tomas Bata* (Ontario: IEP Press, 1968); *The Stormy Years of an Extraordinary Enterprise, 1932-1945* (New Jersey: Universum Sakol, 1985).For discussion see Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 36-38.

[86] Other research includes Gillian Darley, *Villages of Vision: A Study of Strange Utopias* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2007), 261-62; David Dimbleby, *How We Built Britain* (Bloomsbury, 2008), 243-45; Finn Jensen, *Modernist Semis and Terraces in England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 37-42; Rumsey, *Bata Factory*.

[87] Quoted in Darley, *Excellent Essex*, 128.

[88] On interwar Bata company towns see Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 103-88. On East Tilbury production see http://world.tomasbata.org/europe/great-britain/ (accessed 26 May 2020).

[89] Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 18, 37-44, 89-101, 163-64.

legacy.[90] Utopian discourse is purely afforded to its architecture, but as housing estates they rarely take a feature role in histories of modernism in Britain.[91] Unlike East Tilbury, Silver End has no paternal or sister settlements and there has been even less published on the history of the CMC than Bata. What we do know is largely derived from David Blake's *Window Vision* (1989), a company-funded celebration of its history, and Francis Crittall's 1935 autobiography.[92] What was once the largest metal window company in Britain (and probably the world), whose products were visible in every town in Britain and in over 80 countries, was reduced by a combination of the Great Depression and its isolated location in north-east Essex to obscurity. Despite this, it was one of the largest employers in Essex between the wars and a rare example of British manufacturing success. By 1935, around 40% of new homes built in Britain used Crittall windows, double that of any other manufacturer.[93] 'Twentieth-century Britons looked out through little else,' as Gillian Darley put it, 'whether at home or at work, in industrial villages or fashionable resorts, in garden suburb or, later, New Towns.'[94]

Few people stumble upon the sleepy village nestled between the cities of Chelmsford and Colchester, even locals travelling between the towns of Braintree and Witham. What was once a bustling 'modern utopia' of young families that claimed to have the highest birth rate and lowest death rate in England is now little remembered.[95] Around 6,000 people visited its village hall in 1935 to attend a British Institute of Adult Education exhibition, which included a Vincent

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[90] East Tilbury was the only estate to use modernism entirely. Other estates include the middle-class Frinton-on-Sea (Essex) and 'accidentally modernist' Clockhouse Way-Cressing Road (Braintree), discussed in chapter three.
[91] Tony Crosby, 'The Silver End Model Village for Crittall Manufacturing Co. Ltd.', *Industrial Archaeology Review*, 20:1 (1998), 69-82; Thurgood, 'Silver End Garden Village', 36-42. See also Robin Carpenter, *Mr Pink: The Architectural Legacy of Walter Francis Crittall* (Braintree: Essex County Council, 2007); Finn Jensen and Ellen Thorogood-Page, 'Britain's First Steps in Modernism: Cressing Road and Clockhouse Way Estate, 1918-20', *Architectural Research Quarterly* 13 (2009), 273-83.
[92] Crittall, *Fifty Years*; David Blake, *Window Vision* (Suffolk: Richard Clay, 1989).
[93] Blake, *Window Vision*, 72, 77, 113.
[94] Darley, *Excellent Essex*, 89.
[95] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 137.

Van Gogh masterpiece, *Peach Trees in Blossom* (1889).[96] The village hall, much altered, is still thought to be the largest in England, but its grand department store is now gone, its 'model' hotel and Francis and Ellen Crittall's palatial home are residential homes, and its factory – which once employed hundreds of disabled men – is empty and crumbling. The modernistic architecture of both villages boldly divorced themselves from their rural surroundings, they were siren calls for a 'modern', functional and industrial future which the nation never fully embraced, and now stand as a reminder of a distinct and unrealised capitalist interwar idealism. Employers have deserted both villages, which act as monuments to utopian experimentation lost in a post-industrial malaise, now functioning as quiet retirement or commuter villages.[97]

The same cannot be said for their precursors or garden cities like Letchworth and Welwyn, which have been the subject of extensive interest from historians, heritage professionals and tourists.[98] Scholars of the USA have enthusiastically explored the history of company towns, where it was estimated in 1938 that two million Americans lived (over 2,500 dotted across the country).[99] Similarly, 'utopian' company towns like Pullman and Vandergrift have been studied

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[96] British Institute of Adult Education, *Art for the People* (1935).

[97] The Silver End factory has not been occupied since 2006 when production ceased. The Bata factory complex is owned by a self-storage company, and largely unoccupied.

[98] Space prevents me from listing these numerous volumes, but take the example of Port Sunlight, which is roughly the size of these villages. Easily accessible from nearby cities, the village has a booming tourism trade centred on its history – nearly 33,000 visited the Port Sunlight Museum in 2014, and 18,000 the Port Sunlight Festival: NorthWest Research, *Digest of Tourism Statistics* (Liverpool: NorthWest Research, 2015). Popular works include Jo Birch, *Port Sunlight and Its People* (Stroud: Amberley, 2018); Edward Hubbard and Michael Shippobottom, *A Guide to Port Sunlight Village* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2005); Jacqueline Yallop, *Dreamstreets: A Journey Through Britain's Village Utopias* (Vintage, 2015), 155-88. Biographies of William Lever include Brian Lewis, *So Clean: Lord Leverhulme, Soap and Civilisation* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2008); Adam MacQueen, *King of Sunlight* (Reading: Corgi, 2005).

[99] John Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1965), 437; Hardy Green, *The Company Town: The Industrial Edens and Satanic Mills That Shaped the American Economy* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), vi.

for their ironic disintegration.[100] Historians of Britain have generally eschewed the study of company towns, beyond a few famous examples, in favour of municipal and private estates.[101] Although East Tilbury and Silver End were not Britain's only company settlements built between the wars, they were part of the nation's (much diminished) last wave of them. Where the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had witnessed a plethora of company villages – especially collieries and ironworks – some of which claimed to be utopian, there was just eight company settlements built between the wars, mostly in southern England thanks to the expansion of light industry: Burton Manor Village (Staffordshire), Briantspuddle (Dorset), Harlescott (Shropshire), Harworth (Nottinghamshire), Hersden (Kent), Kemsley (Kent), Somerdale (Bristol) and Stewartby (Bedfordshire). None but Stewartby rivalled East Tilbury and Silver End in size, but it lacked the utopianism (both architecturally and ideologically) of both.[102] Where New Lanark and Saltaire are UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Port Sunlight is pushing for this status and Bournville is a household name, East Tilbury and Silver End are on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register. Silver End, a conservation area since 1983, is in a 'poor' condition and highly vulnerable to development pressure; East Tilbury, a conservation area since 1993, is in a 'very bad' condition and deteriorating.[103] Despite the considerable efforts of local heritage societies, they are largely 'invisible' utopias.

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[100] Jane Eva Baxter, 'The Paradox of Capitalist Utopia: Visionary Ideals and Lived Experience in the Pullman Community, 1880-1900', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 16:4 (2012), 651-660; Stanley Buder, *Pullman: An Experiment in Industrial Order and Community Planning, 1880-1930* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1970); Anne Mosher, *Capital's Utopia: Vandergrift, Pennsylvania, 1855-1916* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2004).

[101] M. Daunton (ed.), *Councillors and Tenants: Local Authority Housing in England 1919–1939* (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1984); Roger Silverstone, *Visions of Suburbia* (Routledge, 1997); Lynsey Handley, *Estates* (Granta, 2007); Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*.

[102] Darley, *Villages of Vision*, 277-324. Although Bournville, New Earswick and Port Sunlight continued to expand. There was also Whiteley Village in Surrey, built for retired workers previously employed by William Whiteley.

[103] Historic England, Heritage at Risk (https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk, accessed 21 May 2020).

The only lengthy research into the social life of Silver End was conducted by Susan King in the early 1990s. King interviewed 20 'pioneer generation' residents, and while the original tapes were lost, her MA thesis (later published) gives us vital clues about attitudes towards paternalism, poverty, the Crittall family, community and utopian aspirations. The Silver End Heritage Society, established in 2009 to 'record and promote its international architectural importance and its social and industrial history', also conducted oral histories of 48 older residents in 2013, but most were too young to remember the interwar years.[104] In addition, I will also use interviews conducted by Janet Gyford between 1976 and the early 1990s with Witham residents, which provides rich detail about working life at the CMC.[105] Few oral testimonies exist for East Tilbury. A 'memories' project was started by the Bata Heritage Society in 2002 onwards and has since collected over 30 memoirs, but few from 'pioneers' between the wars.[106]

In using some oral testimonies, I recognise (however limited my use) there are numerous methodological issues which, unfortunately, space does not permit me to fully discuss. Since the 1970s oral historians have debated the role of cultural determinism and agency in shaping testimonies. The influential 'Popular Memory Group' at the University of Birmingham warned historians in the late 1970s of the issues concerning the construction of memory, and ever since the field has been dominated by poststructuralist debates over the reliability of memory and how past narratives are 'composed.'[107] Yet oral history is, at its core, a means of uncovering

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[104] King, *Guv'nor's Village*; Silver End Heritage Society, Silver End Stories (http://www.silverendheritagesociety.co.uk/silver-end-stories, accessed 1 June 2020).
[105] Janet Gyford, Interviews (https://www.janetgyford.com/interviews/, accessed 1 June 2020).
[106] Bata Heritage Centre, Memories (http://www.batamemories.org.uk/MAIN/ENG/00-EN-Pages/05-Memories.html, accessed 1 June 2020).
[107] Popular Memory Group, 'Popular memory: Theory, Politics, Method', R. Johnson *et al.* (eds.), *Making Histories: Studies in History, Writing and Politics* (Hutchinson, 1982), 206-220; Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 'Introduction', in Perks and Thomson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader: Third Edition* (Routledge, 2006), 1-21.

voices that have been silenced by the historical record and which may challenge or reinterpret dominant narratives. This factor is given added weight in company villages which monopolised the cultural and social apparatuses of everyday life, where the 'struggle for hegemony' has added importance. As the Popular Memory Group argued, memories are influenced by public representations and ownership over 'the historical apparatus', which certainly these companies dominated in the village. King's largely positive interviews, she notes, were indeed shaped by the 'hegemonic' control the CMC held over Silver End and the historical narrative, but even here there were voices that did not accept the 'version of utopia' presented by the firm. Added to this was King's unrepresentative sample: the majority had been Silver End residents their whole lives and were children between the wars. Gyford's accounts, meanwhile, were primarily with adults living in and around Silver End and present a far less praiseworthy account of both the company and the village.[108] Oral history will form one part of my argument concerning agency and resistance to corporate control explored in chapter five.

Due to the absence of considerable secondary material, evidence used to piece together the history of life in the villages come not only from these interviews but also memoirs, autobiographies, press coverage, business records, company publications, and trade union and local government records. Completing the thesis has, however, certainly presented many challenges. Towards the beginning of my studies, a car was stolen, deliberately driven into the heritage centre at East Tilbury and set alight.[109] Fortunately, much of the archive survived the attack, but it took several years to repair the documents from smoke damage. As such, it was not until January 2020 I was able to access this material, and only a limited amount. Not long after, the pandemic and subsequent lockdown also caused disruption when writing my thesis,

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[108] King, *Guv'nor's Village*; Popular Memory Group, 'Popular memory', 206-220.
[109] *Thurrock Gazette* (6 January 2017).

not least because of a lack of workspace, interruptions when working from home, and the closure of libraries and archives. While some larger institutions digitised records, this thesis largely rests on archival material held in repositories unable to provide these services. I hope these challenges have not significantly harmed the quality of the final product.

There are, however, unavoidable and lamentable gaps in the historical record. As no single significant archive or collection exists for either East Tilbury or Silver End that covers the interwar period, this thesis has been pieced together from various collections. The Crittall archive held at Braintree Museum provided valuable information about the history of the CMC, but little on life in Silver End and the company did not keep a meticulous and accessible record of its history like Cadbury's or Rowntree's. Similarly, British Bata did not donate its company archive to the Bata Heritage Centre, and I was unable to locate it in Zlín or elsewhere. What we know of Bata and East Tilbury largely comes from its weekly *Bata Record*, translated speeches from Tomas and Jan Bata, and limited interwar material held at the Heritage Centre. Similarly, the Silver End Heritage Society has done a fantastic job researching the early years of the village, but its archive is also limited by historical circumstances. Susan King's interviews were destroyed, for example, and only two copies of the *Silver End Monthly* has ever been located, both recovered from a skip. Unfortunately, as is often the case with histories of marginalised communities, residents felt little need to maintain a detailed record of their lives. As such, these archives have been supplemented by a considerable volume of contemporary newspapers and magazines, utopian fiction and non-fiction, published primary work, and any material I could find on the villages at Essex Record Office. This included an eclectic mix of records, from dinner menus to donated personal collections. In addition, an assortment of archival material related to the two companies, employers' organisations and, significantly, their unions, has also been included, housed at the Modern Records Centre at the University

of Warwick. There is much more that could, and should, be written about these villages and interwar capitalist utopianism, but regrettably not all of it could be included.

Is Capitalism 'inevitable and timeless'?

This thesis is not intended to fit neatly into the field of economic history or business history. While these elements are undoubtedly employed at times, it will draw inspiration from the growing 'history of capitalism' subgenre, alongside developments in social and cultural history. Using the microscope of two villages in Essex, it will illuminate the telescope of an idealised political economy, with its inherent paradoxes and conflicts. Following three decades where pluralist, relativist and poststructuralist theory has dominated cultural and social history, and academia more generally, anglophone historians are gradually returning to questions of class. While the breadth and depth of studies has been a cause for celebration, 'what is often at the heart of criticisms of contemporary social and cultural history is an attack precisely on the pluralism and relativism of its project and the deliberate disavowal of intellectual certainties […] which is unable to provide any connecting narrative thread between disparate elements', as Frank Mort has argued.[110] By the 1980s economic history was also shifting, as academics increasingly understood capitalism from the bottom up. But as business and economic historians focused on demand and the individual, and cultural historians on narratives of resistance, both became 'less adept at explaining how ideas such as the free market became hegemonic': how the ideology and power of capitalism was embedded in everyday lives. Even the dwindling field of labour history focused on consumption, not production, as the primary

[110] Frank Mort, 'Foreword' in Sasha Handley, Rohan McWilliam, Lucy Noakes, *New Directions in Social and Cultural History* (Bloomsbury, 2018), xiv; Handley, McWilliam and Noakes, 'Introduction' in *New Directions*, 8-10. These developments have worked simultaneously and tangentially with arguments against 'the spectre of the short term': Jo Guldi and David Armitage, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014).

cause of change.[111] As cultural and social historians quietly return to class-based structural analyses, they are not abandoning the rich and ever-expanding variety of studies or disregarding agency, but acknowledging that a greater understanding of forces 'from above' is needed. In a Thompsonian sense, this methodology interprets social categories such as class as a process whereby materialism, ideology and culture intertwine.[112] Likewise, historians are again interested in how ideologies are diffused and internalised through everyday social processes.[113]

Moreover, the reluctance of economists to probe the embeddedness of market forces in social, cultural or political life has been matched by an unwillingness by historians to place economic determinants at the centre of their work. However, following the financial crash of 2007-8, several US universities attempted to rectify this and initiated research centres on the history of capitalism, led by Sven Beckert at Harvard.[114] In April 2013, interest in this topic had gained so much traction it made the headline of the *New York Times*. As of 2018 every Ivy League college offered some form of study into the history of capitalism(s), alongside other major research-intensive universities.[115] In late 2017, the University of Oxford established its own 'Global History of Capitalism' but, generally, the response from UK universities to this considerable shift in US historiography has been indifferent.[116] Regarding twentieth-century British history, one exception lies with David Edgerton, who has placed both capitalism and

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[111] Donna Loftus, 'Markets and Culture', in Handley *et al.*, *New Directions,* 109-17.
[112] Katrina Navickas, 'A return to materialism? Putting Social History back into place', in Handley *et al.*, *New Directions*, 94-100. See also Kenneth Liapartito, 'Reassembling the Economic: New Departures in Historical Materialism', *American Historical Review* 11 (2016), 101-139 and Hannah Forsyth, 'Seeking a New Materialism in Australian History', *Australian Historical Studies* 48:2 (2017), 169-88.
[113] Handley, McWilliam and Noakes, 'Introduction', 14-15, and Donna Loftus, 'Markets and Culture', 117-23, in *New Directions*.
[114] For Beckert's work, see *The Monied Metropolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001); *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Vintage, 2014).
[115] *The New York Times* (6 April 2013); 'Teaching the History of Capitalism: A Report on the Harvard Teaching Capitalism Conference', (http://studyofcapitalism.harvard.edu/teaching-resources, accessed 21 March 2018).
[116] 'The Global History of Capitalism', (https://globalcapitalism.web.ox.ac.uk/home, accessed 21 March 2018).

political economy at the heart of his work. 'The politics of capital', as he rightly argues, 'was the central political fight of the twentieth century', but remarkably little has been written about it or, indeed, capitalists themselves: they too are 'invisible' despite their centrality to understanding British history. In a nation where 'political economy was the language of British public life' this involves treating capitalism not just theoretically or financially, as it has often been, but its 'material manifestations.'[117] Nowhere was the praxis of capitalist idealism better illuminated than in these villages.

While this emerging subfield is diverse, it is often unified by a reaction against traditional business and economic histories which are perceived as uncritical of capitalism. These studies broadly move away from quantitative research *within* capitalism and towards the exploration of the ideologies of capitalism(s) and their intersection with political institutions, social relations and cultural change. These authors examine areas of conceptual conflict, social contestation, collective mobilisation and consciousness, complicity and legitimacy, ethics and morality, globalisation and technological change. In short, they explore the textual and un-scientific, and open the field beyond social scientists. At the core of this work is the question, as Seth Rockman puts it, 'how did capitalism come to be understood as inevitable and timeless?'[118] As part of this movement, studies of capitalist utopianism have also slowly emerged, but as yet in no comprehensive way.[119]

Frustrated with the depiction of capitalism as natural, inevitable and often boring, and driven by a demand from students born after the Cold War and maturing during the Great Recession,

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[117] David Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History* (Penguin, 2019), XXXI-XXXVII, 103-24, 156-161.
[118] 'Teaching the History of Capitalism', (http://studyofcapitalism.harvard.edu/teaching-resources).
[119] Richard White, 'Utopian Capitalism', in Beckert and Christine Desan, *American Capitalism: New Histories* (New York: Columbia UP, 2018), 119-39.

the subfield is asking questions about contingency, resistance and hegemony with the aim of 'denaturalising' the economy.[120] Much of this research probes the embeddedness of the free market in the everyday customs, relationships, institutions and apparatuses of social life, and how, as Julia Ott writes, 'economic theories operate as ideology and shape the reality they purport to describe in a neutral fashion.'[121] Many historians of capitalism arrived at the field via labour history and see it as a continuation of New Left historiography. It is 'history from below, all the way to the top', writes Louis Hyman, 'to understand the history of labour, I really needed to understand the history of capital.'[122]

In also denaturalising capitalism, my thesis explores some of the fundamental themes raised by recent social and cultural history, as well as the history of capitalism. As both strands of historiography return to questions of hegemony, contingency and the reproduction of socio-economic relations, my work uses the examples of East Tilbury and Silver End to explain how capitalism was justified, reproduced and transformed in a period of ideological and functional crisis. While it interrogates the ideological justifications for capitalism just like, for example, Thomas Piketty, its methodology is the reverse of Piketty's global *longue durée*: in studying two small communities over the course of two decades, we can better understand how ideologies were instrumentalised (and fell apart).[123] Using the three faces of utopianism, chapter one will propose a theory of liberal capitalist utopianism through three principles: liberty as self-determination, efficiency as universal opulence, and justice as unity of interests. As Luhmann

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[120] Sven Beckert *et al.*, 'Interchange: The History of Capitalism', *Journal of American History* 101:2, (2014), 503-8; Louis Hyman, 'Why Write the History of Capitalism?', *Symposium Magazine* (8 July 2013, http://www.symposium-magazine.com/why-write-the-history-of-capitalism-louis-hyman/); Jonathan Levy, 'Capital as Process and the History of Capitalism', *Business History Review*, 91:3 (2017), 483-85.
[121] Sven Beckert *et al.*, 'Interchange', 506.
[122] *Ibid*, 516; Hyman, 'Why Write the History of Capitalism?' See Jürgen Kocka and Marcel van der Linden (eds.), *Capitalism: The Re-emergence of a Historical Concept* (Bloomsbury, 2018).
[123] Piketty, *Capital and Ideology* (Belknap, 2020).

argued, it will maintain that this was often 'invisible as a utopia', but nevertheless featured on the political right during the crisis of capitalism – including in the ideologies advocated by Francis Crittall and Tomas Bata – and was embodied in East Tilbury and Silver End.

Chapter two will explore the growth of welfare capitalism between the wars as a response to the threat of left-wing militancy. It will argue this provides a partial explanation of Britain's relative political stability between the wars and will outline how the CMC and Bata embraced welfare capitalism prior to the construction of their model villages; welfare capitalism and these villages were categorically not viewed as philanthropic. Chapter three will detail the growth of technological and technocratic utopianism between the wars, which was encapsulated in the architecture of East Tilbury and Silver End. It will detail the rapid construction of the two settlements, and how modernism was closely associated in Britain with industrial capitalism. Chapter four will outline how life in the village was socially engineered and monopolised by the two companies. The concept of 'enmeshment' will be used to understand how the companies attempted to establish ideological and cultural control over all their residents. It will explain how the apparatuses of everyday life were used to engineer a 'spontaneous' ardour for the political economy, and further still, attempt to establish a corporate collective consciousness.[124] This corporate consciousness reflected many of the ideological and social aspects which would later be associated with embourgeoisement. The final chapter will detail where capitalist utopianism failed, often dramatically, and how the agency of residents undermined this social control. By fighting corporate autocracy, it will argue that residents embodied the growing appeal for a more equal, democratic Britain started in the mid-1930s and saw its culmination in the Labour Party's 1945 landslide election win. It

[124] To borrow a phrase from Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (Verso, 2003, first translated in 1971), 327-34.

will maintain that part of this victory can be traced back to the ideological breakdown of liberal capitalist utopianism between the wars and how this (sometimes violent) resistance to corporate control can be witnessed in these two villages, the apparent manifestation of utopian capitalism.

Chapter One – The Principles of Capitalist Utopianism

A year after the General Strike of 1926 a debate started in the letters pages of *The Times* that raged for several weeks. It was sparked by Sir Theodore Morison, the principal of Armstrong College in Newcastle, who suggested that many of the nation's capitalists secretly 'indulged in projecting utopias for the future', and he thought it their 'responsibility' to 'confide those visions to the public […] [to] put forward a constructive policy of individualism.' In countering socialist 'idealism', he called for a 'capitalist's utopia' – not a 'cut-and-dried plan such as could be proposed at a shareholders meeting' but 'daydreams […] however visionary' to pacify an 'anxious public' over Britain's future.[1] Employers, politicians and free thinkers replied from all over the country. Some were predictably dismissive, given the belief, also pushed in other right-wing papers, that capitalism was timeless, natural and anathema to utopianism.[2] Others were more supportive. One letter pointed to employee shareholder schemes as an example of this idealism, as it merged the interests of workers and management. Another claimed that less government interference and lower taxes would generate greater prosperity.[3] John Taylor Peddie, chairman of the British Industrial Economic Foundation, went further still, asking 'upon what grounds' capitalism could persist if it did not engage with its own social dreaming. He called for a new 'spirit', modelled on the USA, to bring about a high-wage, low-tax Britain where the interests of all classes were unified.[4] All responses, however, placed the failures of capitalism at the foot of trade unionism, a characteristically undemocratic feature of capitalist utopianism.

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[1] *The Times* (27 July 1927).
[2] *Ibid* (29 July 1927). For example, *Daily Mail* (19 September 1925, 20, 21 January 1926).
[3] *Times* (4, 18 August 1927).
[4] *Ibid* (5 August 1927).

This exchange highlights the often 'invisible' utopianism on the centre-right between the wars, a period when there existed a 'phenomenal will to believe in utopia' as Theodore von Laue put it.[5] The future took on greater political importance in the first half of the twentieth century, and this was primarily pioneered not by the moderate Labour Party or leftist radicals as often assumed, but by the conservative and wealthy: 'the future was the business of the powerful.'[6] In the face of political extremism, rediscovering the utopian appeal of capitalism in embattled western economies was strong, but it was foolish to openly adopt the rhetoric of the far left when its pursuit of 'utopia' was used to discredit it. While there was a decline in the number of literary utopias published in the first half of the twentieth century in the USA, for example, there were still at least 236, 47 of which incorporated capitalism.[7] It was not until after the Second World War, for understandable reasons, that the political capital of utopianism was greatly discredited.[8] Another high-profile individual to respond to Morison, the Glaswegian industrialist Sir James Lithgow, defended the utopian trajectory of liberal capitalism because it raised the living standards of the 'very poorest', provided 'unlimited opportunities of self-advancement to all classes' based on 'individual ability' (ironically, he inherited his business), and pioneered new scientific advances.[9] As we shall see, the themes of individual liberty, meritocratic social mobility and productive efficiency were also shared by most capitalist utopians, and formed the basis of its core principles.

One of the first theorists to associate capitalism with utopianism was Karl Mannheim, writing in his widely debated *Ideology and Utopia* (1929, published in English in 1936). While his

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[5] T. von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin? A Reappraisal of the Russian Revolution, 1900-1930* (New York: JB Lippincott, 1971), 181.
[6] Edgerton, *Rise and Fall*, 174-75.
[7] Segal, 'Utopia Diversified: 1900-1949', in Roemer (ed.), *America as Utopia*, 333-38.
[8] Sargent, 'Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited', 26-27.
[9] *Times* (30 July 1927).

magnum opus is better remembered as a foundational text for the sociology of knowledge, his discussion of utopianism sparked divisive debate between the wars. For Mannheim, utopia was central to understanding ideology, but this utopianism was often hidden and needed unmasking, which was only possible with hindsight. Unlike most scholars, Mannheim broadly perceived utopianism as a negative expression of class interests, and a means of reinforcing the status quo. Nonetheless, he also argued (from a Hegelian standpoint) that utopianism, like ideology, was in a dialectical relationship and the great conflict of his time was between 'the conservative idea' and its 'counter-utopia [...] the socialist-community utopia.' For Mannheim, the conservative utopia – characterised by 'bourgeois liberalism', a 'unilinear' sense of historical change through continuous 'progress', an antagonism towards the state and a secular outlook – was the reification of enlightenment idealism and provided 'acceptance and affirmation to the existing order.' In utopianism, Mannheim identified the highest but often 'invisible' form of ideological and political conflict, but also stressed that humanity desperately needed this social dreaming. It was ethereal, he reasoned, but attempting to 'transcend actual existence' was the basis of all major social change. 'The disappearance of utopia brings about a static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing', he wrote, 'left without ideals, [he] becomes a mere creature of impulses.'[10] Although Mannheim supplies us with a basis of capitalist utopianism between the late-eighteenth century and the 1930s, he does not expand on what precisely constituted this 'conservative idea.'

While there is no definitive capitalist utopian doctrine, the philosophy that binds most of these social dreams can be reduced to three principles: liberty as self-determination, efficiency as

[10] Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Capital* (Routledge, 1936), 173-235; Lyman Tower Sargent, 'Ideology and Utopia: Karl Mannheim and Paul Ricoeur', in Zsolt Cziganyik (ed.), *Utopian Horizons: Ideology, Politics and Literature* (Budapest: Central European UP, 2017), 19-36.

universal opulence, and justice as unity of interests.[11] On its surface, the largely pre-industrial world of Adam Smith would seemingly have little in common with Margrie's interwar London. Indeed, the ideological engagement that helps to justify, legitimise and sustain capitalism – which elicits an individual's consent and enthusiasm for the existing 'dominant ideology' – is far from fixed. This 'spirit of capitalism', as Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello have argued, shifts across epochs and means comparisons are often difficult to solidify.[12] Yet, while capitalism may be characterised by the 'constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions', as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote in 1848, its utopian promises are interwoven into its history.[13]

Marx may have acknowledged the unpredictable, adaptive nature of capitalism, but he also understood its core appeal. In an ironic section of *Capital,* he argued the private sale and purchase of labour power was presented as the:

> very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, say of labour-power, are constrained only by their own free will. They contract as free agents, […] Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to himself. The only force that brings them together and puts them in relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interests of each […] and just because they do so, do they all, in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things, or under the auspices of an all-shrewd providence, work together to their mutual advantage, for the common weal and in the interest of all.[14]

[11] While my three principles have little resemblance, the reduction of political economies to three principles has been argued in a contemporary context: see Arnsperger and Varoufakis, 'What is Neoclassical Economics?', 5-18.
[12] Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 8-29.
[13] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Penguin, 2014, first English translation 1888), 327.
[14] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Charles Kerr, 1906, first English translation 1887), 190-96.

Thus, the founding principles of capitalist utopianism are outlined: the sanctity of private property, the free market, the unlimited potential for personal gain, limited government and the freedom to pursue one's supposedly innate selfishness. This faith in individual liberty has often been understood as the pursuit of greed, unlimited prosperity and consumption for all, where all are equal and equally informed on the marketplace.[15] Marx used the example of post-1848 Belgium to showcase this reputed 'paradise of the labourer […] the paradise of continental liberalism.' This was the free-trade period in which commercial travellers could tell 'fabulous tales' of wealth, prosperity and freedom, but where Marx argued the heartless exploitative practices of factory owners reached their height.[16] For classical liberal philosophers, including Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham, free enterprise and private property were considered the best methods of protecting liberty, as it allowed individuals the freedom to make contracts and sell their labour power; the ability to control capital was an integral part of individual liberty. This belief began to break in the 1820s and was seriously challenged by the 1930s when faith in the stability of the market to direct economic life (Adam Smith's 'invisible hand') was questioned, and the unrestricted accumulation of private property was increasingly seen as an unjust inequality of power, not the protector of liberty. Today, 'liberal' is an ambiguous term and therefore using 'liberal utopianism' is problematic, so 'capitalist utopianism' will be used throughout.

Nonetheless, the utopian appeal remained strong. In the immediate aftermath of the Great War right-wing commentators like financial journalist Hartley Withers sought to defend a reformed capitalism through the prism of liberalism. In his 1920 eutopian book *The Case for Capitalism*, Withers accepted that while the political economy had drawbacks (inequality,

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[15] Claeys, *Searching for Utopia,* 8-10.
[16] Marx, *Capital*, 264-66, 326-31, 737-39.

destruction of natural beauty) these were more than offset by economic freedom which had 'benefitted all classes'; improved technology and output (universal opulence); meritocratic social mobility and social justice; and common class interests.[17] These elements were also evident in parliamentary debates between the wars. In various motions discussing the future of capitalism, Conservative MPs argued that where socialism would 'impoverish the people', restrict economic freedom and create class warfare, capitalism had raised living and working conditions through the use of technology and technocracy (efficiency as universal opulence). It had allowed all to act on their 'individual initiative' and had given 'every man and woman an opportunity […] to get ahead' (liberty as self-determination), and given all classes a 'fair deal' as they shared the nation's prosperity (justice as unity of interests). Welfare capitalism was particularly lauded.[18] While the tone of these debates was defensive, utopianism was undoubtedly a shared aspect of these justifications. 'I, like many other Members, have a longing desire for the world to be better […] to make this capitalist system give even more to the people than it has done already', Nancy Astor put it in 1928, a 'capitalism which can give an even higher rate of living to the great masses.'[19]

1. Liberty as Self-determination

While classical liberal philosophers differed on the role of the state in the economy (notably John Stuart Mill argued greater intervention was beneficial), all agreed that personal liberty was assured through the absence of coercive powers, often in the form of government.[20] The belief that human 'happiness' could only find form through persuasion and reason, not force,

[17] Withers, *The Case for Capitalism*.
[18] House of Commons 161:2473-2512 (20 March 1923); 309:2216-2278 (11 March 1936); Louse of Lords 96:178-260 (20 March 1935, https://hansard.parliament.uk).
[19] House of Commons 215:398-465 (21 March 1928).
[20] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (John Parker, 1859), 21-22.

is typically thought to have started with John Locke, and was extended by Adam Smith and utilitarian thinkers, such as Jeremy Bentham and Herbert Spencer. The link between economic and personal liberty was a fundamental aspect of classical liberal philosophy, which enshrined the belief that private property was a precondition and the defender of freedom. Locke was the first to make this apparent by arguing men had a right to enjoy the fruits of their own labour and was substantiated by Smith through his Labour Theory of Value, which came to heavily influence later theorists, including David Ricardo.[21]

Liberty was therefore fundamentally explained through the right to individual self-determination. The state had a duty to protect life, liberty and property, to prevent compulsion without justification and, in doing so, allow citizens to be autonomous, self-directing individuals. The underlying assumption made in both classical and neoclassical economic theories, therefore, is that without the coercive force of the state, agents are perfectly informed and rational beings who act out of self-interest. Citizens are presumed to be financially driven, whose self-interest works for the collective good when faced with the right incentives.[22] As the champions of individuality and free choice, these theorists shaped and embodied capitalism with moral justifications centred squarely on an individual's right to liberty. In this respect, classical liberal theories were fundamentally secular, as they dealt with relations in the material world and primarily between citizens and the state, not the church. Later capitalist utopians also committed themselves to this viewpoint, seeing religious faith as too passive, deferential and lacking the dynamic for substantial change.[23]

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[21] There are many books on the relationship between classical liberalism and economics. For example, John Kenneth Galbraith, *Economics in Perspective: A Critical History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 57-125.
[22] Daniel Attas, *Liberty, Property and Markets: A Critique of Libertarianism* (Oxford: Routledge, 2017), 29-37; Dwight Lee, 'Economics with Romance', *The Independent Review* 5:1 (2000), 123-24.
[23] William Margrie, *The Mighty Heart; A Survey of England* (Watts and Co., 1925); Geoffrey Brennan and Michael Munger, 'The Soul of James Buchanan?', *The Independent Review* 18:3 (2014), 341.

Given the challenge of collective ownership to this worldview, it is unsurprising that capitalist utopian literature (and socialist dystopias) have contrasted the presumed liberty of private enterprise with the authoritarianism of socialism. Such comparisons were particularly common in the initial years of the Cold War. The juxtaposition between the oppressive, dystopian 'People's States' and the capitalist 'Utopia of Greed' in Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) is the most famous of these antithetical worlds, but this concept predates Rand.[24] In 1890, John Bachelder and H. Elton Smith depicted Edward Bellamy's nationalisation (socialist) policies, as advocated in the bestseller *Looking Backward* (1887), turning foul and resulting in a totalitarian state until challenged by the free market.[25] In Britain, George Griffith's adventure set in the South Sea Islands, *The Outlaws of the Air* (1895), described a community of a freedom-loving capitalists seizing control of an island from tyrannous anarchists, while Ernest Bramah's 1907 socialist dystopia *What Might Have Been* portrayed a deindividualised population liberated by an upper-class revolt that restored capitalism.[26] The theme of deindividuation is a common one in socialist dystopias, and motivations to rid society of anything but the bare minimum of government intervention continued to influence domestic politics. In 1935, Liberal Party leader Sir Herbert Samuel outlined his utopia, in which he called for the removal of trade restrictions, reductions in taxation and the development of industrial self-government.[27] Liberal capitalism, not the presumed despotism of socialism, was believed to ensure a utopia of free-thinking, free-acting citizens.

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[24] For example, Henry Hazlitt, *The Great Idea* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951).
[25] John Bachelder, *AD 2050: Electrical Development at Atlantis* (California: Bancroft Company, 1890); H. Elton Smith, 'The Last Sinner', *Overland Monthly* 15:90 (1890), 618-28.
[26] George Griffin, *The Outlaws of the Air* (Tower Publishing, 1895); Earnest Bramah, *What Might Have Been: The Story of a Social War* (John Murray, 1907).
[27] Herbert Samuel, *If I Were Dictator* (Liberal Publications, 1935).

The universal potential for 'meritocratic' upward social mobility was an essential underlying aspect of this utopian thought. The freedom to accumulate vast wealth from humble origins was presented as a superior, fairer system of social justice compared to the supposedly stagnant economies of the past, or left-wing anti-utopias that were presumed to reward the feckless and punish the ambitious. Inequality was seemingly not a vice but a positive incentive to work hard, conform and prosper. Poverty was therefore a choice, it was argued, and not a combination of misfortune, opportunity and institutional inequalities. 'We want the common people made uncommon', William Margrie wrote in *A Capitalist's Utopia*. 'Opportunity? Make your own opportunity.' When he called on readers to emulate the great men (not women) of history, the 'captains of industry', he was echoing the established belief that social ascension was open to all men. Margrie's unwavering belief in rugged individualism was expressed just months before Herbert Hoover popularised the phrase in his renewed appeal to liberal capitalism.[28] A whiggish conviction in the development of liberty and material abundance proliferates in utopian capitalist thinking, including later writers like Friedrich Hayek and James Buchanan who advocated genuinely meritocratic and socially fluid political economies. These social dreamers reserved their praise for the self-made man, the bringers of material plenty, and not those who inherited wealth and undeservingly clung to it.[29] Between the wars, the likes of Sir Alfred Mond, a leading British capitalist and Conservative MP, used the example of his father's social mobility to defend liberal capitalism.[30] Mannheim agreed, writing that economic freedom was the basis of 'conservative' utopianism since the Enlightenment.[31]

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[28] Margrie, *Capitalist's Utopia*, 9-10, 29. Maldwyn Jones, *Limits of Liberty: American History 1607-1980* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), 455.
[29] Brennan and Munger, 'The Soul of James Buchanan?', 337-41.
[30] *Manchester Guardian* (21 March 1923).
[31] Mannheim, *Ideology and Capital*, 184-85, 206.

Similarly, in 1934 William Beveridge claimed his 'utopia' included equality of educational opportunity, meritocratic governance and economic self-determination for all *men*.[32]

Of course, 'rags-to-riches' tales predate liberal capitalism by more than a millennium but have had a particularly strong appeal since the rise of industrial capitalism. Characters such as Jean Valjean in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862) or Michael Henchard in Thomas Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) personified romantic journeys from poverty to wealth and preached that even penniless rogues could become wealthy and powerful if they worked hard. The libertarian promises of the Declaration of Independence were extended in 1931 when James Truslow Adams claimed the 'American Dream' granted 'opportunity according to ability […] regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.'[33] It is interesting that fictional figureheads of this dream, such as F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby, came with a warning about the limits of material prosperity, but nonetheless were shown to have earned their fortune in the 'land of opportunity.'[34] For every socially mobile fictional character there have been real examples held up as museum pieces in public discourse – the William Levers and Henry Fords – and in doing so, social class was presented as transient and porous. The 'bourgeois ideology of work' employed to motivate workers asserts that labour is always paid its value, social class is a reflection of an individuals' work ethic, and wealth legally acquired is morally acquired: in short, you reap what you sow.[35] This message was also projected in utopian capitalist fiction, such as in A.T. Churchill's *The New Industrial Dawn* (1939), where social position was based on merit, not inherited privilege.[36]

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[32] William Beveridge, 'My Utopia', in Beveridge, *Planning Under Socialism*, 137-42.
[33] James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America* (Boston: Little Brown, 1931), 214-15.
[34] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1925).
[35] Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (Verso, 2014, originally 1971), 34-42.
[36] A.T. Churchill, *The New Industrial Dawn* (Seattle: Lowman and Hanford, 1939).

Later capitalist utopian theorists, like Jason Brennan, have used the presumption that capitalism rewards productive and talented people to defend the political economy, and maintain inequality is a by-product of greater prosperity for all.[37] Of course, in these utopias economic inequality is not only maintained but to be celebrated, as social position and wealth is determined by an idealised and apparently value-neutral understanding of 'merit.' Other scholars have been quick to argue that meritocracy is one of the foundational myths of capitalism, and an ideology that blames the individual for their poverty; they maintain true equality of opportunity under capitalism is impossible. Where champions of this ideology see it as essential to social justice, critics maintain this liberty rests on the unfreedom of others, and subjection by corporations simply replaces state compulsion.[38] In the USA, technological utopians between the wars advanced the idea of a new 'organic social order' based on an inflexible and technocratic (undemocratic) meritocracy, which partly reflected a wider faith that science and technology could dispassionately solve major social and economic problems.[39] In Britain, the slight middle-class expansion between the wars, coupled with the growth of affordable suburban homes, white-collar jobs and cheap consumer goods (often bought on hire-purchase) meant some commentators, somewhat naively, believed Britain was increasingly socially fluid. 'We are all becoming middle class', Conservative Philip Gibbs wrote in 1933, 'that seems to be the direction of the new society […] a common level of opportunity and reward.'[40] Many companies, meanwhile, established comprehensive educational programmes and other forms of 'self-improvement' to help promote advancement in the

[37] Brennan, *Why Not Capitalism*, 51-55.
[38] For a general discussion, see Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions*, 186-96, 201-13.
[39] Discussed in chapter three.
[40] Quoted in Olechnowicz, *Becontree Estate*, 232-33.

workplace. As we shall see, British Bata and the Crittall Manufacturing Company would come to champion these causes, even if they did little to truly advance relative social mobility.

Although the terms 'meritocracy' and 'social mobility' were not widely used until the 1950s – during the disputed 'golden age of social mobility' – these ideas were well understood between the wars.[41] The concept of a linear social structure, where talent and ability determined social position, was popularised and often rested on the nineteenth-century belief Britain was an open society that rewarded self-improvement and hard work, best illustrated by the remarkable success of Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859).[42] 'Merit' in this sense was not limited to effort, achievement or talent, but cultural capital that reproduced and justified class inequalities. Late Edwardian class classification studies grouped not just on occupation but arbitrarily on 'culture' and 'morality', and the results of these studies lingered into the interwar years.[43] Postwar studies into social mobility and 'embourgeoisement' (discussed in chapter three) were 'profoundly shaped' by interwar research, as Chris Renwick has demonstrated.[44] Educational policy, for example, rested on notions of equality of opportunity and the promotion of social mobility, which was thought of in terms of social justice, even if little was done to achieve this.[45] A series of books highlighted 'educational waste' and the need to diversify teaching and learning to prevent the 'elimination' of talent, which was believed to stunt Britain's social and economic progress.[46] Social scientists also investigated social mobility

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[41] Meritocracy was coined in 1958: Michael Young, *The Rise of Meritocracy* (Thames and Hudson, 1958).
[42] Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (John Murray, 1859); Christina de Bellaigue, Helena Mills and Eve Worth, '"Rags to Riches?" New Histories of Social Mobility in Modern Britain – Introduction', *Cultural and Social History* 16:1 (2019), 1-11.
[43] Simon Szreter, *Fertility, Class and Gender in Britain, 1860-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002).
[44] Chris Renwick, 'Movement, Space and Social Mobility in early and mid-Twentieth-Century Britain', *Cultural and Social History* 16:1 (2019), 13-28.
[45] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 248-71.
[46] For example, Kenneth Lindsay, *Social Progress and Educational Waste* (Routledge, 1926). See Harold Silver and Pamela Silver, *An Educational War on Poverty* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 158-63.

between the wars, led by the short-lived Department of Social Biology at London School of Economics. Invoking this social dreaming, Alexander Carr-Saunders and David Caradog Jones argued in *Survey of the Social Structure of England And Wales* (1927) that it was 'possible to imagine a society which is no respecter of persons, where the members somehow get into just those occupations for which they are best suited no matter what the standing of parents may be. Such a state of society has […] been envisioned as an ideal to be striven for, but nowhere, as yet, has it been substantially realised.' A belief was widely held that Britain possessed an abundance of economic skills, but this talent was being wasted, and most studies concluded the nation was socially stagnant. These researchers were not only investigating social class in interwar Britain, but also sought ways to lessen social injustice.[47]

One significant omission in this social dreaming was opportunities for women: capitalist utopianism was often intimately tied to patriarchy. Upward social mobility reflected the sexual segregation of formal economic life for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Margrie's sense of male superiority is baldly stated: men were encouraged to realise their full potential, but for women 'it is better to be a good mother than a bad novelist.'[48] Uplifting fictional tales of female social mobility were usually a result of women's heteronormative sexual and intellectual appeal rather than their entrepreneurial ambition. As women's economic freedom improved, their acceptance into this model of meritocracy has also slowly opened, both in actuality and in fiction.[49] The position of women within these texts and in western, liberal societies demonstrates how utopian capitalist appeals for equality of opportunity remained in the realm of social dreaming, but can adapt and transcend cultural

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[47] Alexander Carr-Saunders and David Caradog Jones, *A Survey of the Social Structure of England and Wales* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1927), 142-43; Renwick, 'Social Mobility', 14-23.
[48] Margrie, *Capitalist's Utopia*, 8.
[49] For example, Barbara Taylor Bradford, *A Woman of Substance* (New York: Doubleday, 1979).

and sexual boundaries. The essence of this idealism remains as it traverses different epochs, but between the wars capitalist utopianism reflected dominant patriarchal power relations in society, and excluded women. This was, therefore, not a universalised utopianism but exclusionary, and at British Bata and the CMC, as with most businesses in Britain, there existed a marriage bar for women and social mobility was thought of almost entirely as male social advancement.[50]

Tomas Bata and Francis Crittall epitomised the romantic 'rags-to-riches' tale. For Francis Crittall, who portrayed himself as a plucky self-made man whose determination brought him wealth and success, his humble upbringing was meant to act as a source of pride and inspiration for his workforce. His father, a middling Braintree ironmonger with a large family, was able to send Francis to a modest private school until the age of 16, before he joined the business as an apprentice. However, feeling his entrepreneurialism and independence was stifled, he left for Birmingham where he studied and worked at a major producer of iron bedsteads, and where he met his freethinking and educated future wife, Ellen Carter.[51] Birmingham, the heart of Britain's industrial empire, not only provided Crittall with a business education but one in capitalist-utopian community-building. Eighteen months before he arrived, in 1879, George and Richard Cadbury had relocated their city-centre factory to Bourn, a hamlet four miles south of Birmingham, where they started work on a factory in a garden. While the more utopian aspects of Bournville came after 1895, this was Crittall's first look at 'enlightened' employment and 'garden city' utopianism, which would later act as a model for

[50] Miriam Glucksmann, *Women Assemble: Women Workers in the New Industries in Inter-war Britain* (Routledge, 1990): both the civil service and teaching professions imposed marriage bars for women.
[51] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 39-49.

Silver End.[52] In 1882, aged 22, Francis moved to Chester and opened his own ironmongery, where his knowledge of Edenic company villages likely grew again. Almost two decades earlier William Houldsworth had moved his cotton mill from Manchester to the village of Reddish, where he also built a school, houses, a recreation ground, a working-man's club and a church. Similar villages were also built in nearby Eagley Mills and Atherton. The Wirral was a hotbed for these experiments too, like the model estate of Thornton Hough, which was eventually bought and expanded by William Lever in the early-twentieth century, a precursor to Port Sunlight.[53] The latter was later cited as a key influence on Silver End, and Francis' time spent in the north-west probably had a profound impact on the idealistic entrepreneur.[54]

After the death of his father Francis returned to Braintree and took over management from his older brother. After marrying Ellen, he immediately expanded and diversified the business, doubling the number of employees to 22 within three years and started a retail side-line in sports equipment and bicycles. Specialist metalwork included the production of bridges, roofs, doors, railings and gates, and after an earthquake in Essex and Sussex (the largest ever recorded in Britain, in April 1884) damaged 1,200 buildings, he started experimenting with metal windows. Large orders soon came flooding in for this expensive, bespoke product, eventually installing them at country homes, the House of Commons and the National Gallery. In 1889, then employing 60 men, Francis formed the Crittall Manufacturing Company (CMC) as a separate entity from the traditional ironmongery, to focus almost exclusively on window production, and in June 1894 the CMC moved to a larger factory in Braintree, Manor Works,

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[52] Michael Harrison, *Bournville: Model Village to Garden Suburb* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1999), 23-32; Gillian Wagner, *The Chocolate Conscience* (Chatto and Windus, 1987), 52-57.
[53] Darley, *Villages of Vision*, 130-48, 280-1, 292-93.
[54] *The Crittall Magazine* (December 1926), 263.

which became the first devoted solely to window manufacture.[55] Manor Works was extended in 1897 and in 1904 a permanent head office was opened in Finsbury Square, London. A year later, the CMC was employing around 500 men in Braintree, and Francis grew rich in the process. By 1908, Crittall had an annual salary of £2000, but if we include his income from other companies, rented properties and his annual bonus (at least £250 from 1901), Francis was probably one of the wealthiest 'self-made' men in Essex before the start of the First World War.[56] This was the meritocratic rags-to-riches social dream in full force: as the *Daily Mail* put it upon his death in 1935, 'his life-story is the sort of romance that every man dreams of for himself. The son of an ironmonger in a small way of business, he made his dream come true by his own inspiration and hard work.'[57]

Crittall's ambition was equalled by his unrelenting desire for self-determination. A strong-willed, quick-tempered character, he rejoiced at unshackling himself from the strict Nonconformist environment of his youth. When his father died, he recalled not only great sadness but also 'a faint thrill of excitement' at being his own 'master.' Cast adrift, he forged a new outlook that embraced egoism, materialism and, above all, his own 'natural' liberty.[58] Over the next three decades he set about wrestling control of the CMC from its financiers, including his brother, with the goal of total ownership. His chief annoyance was his inability to manage the firm with absolute sovereignty. As managing director, he could dictate everyday production but was unable to reinvest profits as the board increasingly distributed large dividends, leaving little to finance his ambitious expansion. The board were willing to issue more private shares,

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[55] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 25, 49-72; Blake, *Window Vision*, 14-21.
[56] CMC, Board Minutes (June, October 1901, April 1908, BM); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 84-5; Blake, *Window Vision*, 21-29.
[57] *Daily Mail* (12 March 1935).
[58] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 21-53; Blake *Window Vision*, 11-13.

however, which Francis eagerly bought and gradually gained greater control of the firm. After buying out his brother in 1898, within a decade he had a controlling stake in the company.[59] He quickly consolidated his position by appointing his eldest son, Valentine, as a director and general manager, and in 1913 Valentine was joined by his younger brother Walter, assuring Crittall dominance over the company. All the while, more private shares were issued and bought by Francis, fuelled by his strong belief in economic independence and wealth accumulation, but also his sense of social justice. A proud man, he was irritated with having to plead for further funds from a distant board that grew rich from his leadership, which challenged his meritocratic ideal of capitalism.[60]

Before the First World War Francis had regular run-ins with the local Braintree council, fuelling an anti-statist liberalism that would crystallise at Silver End. Mutual distrust was stoked by a lawsuit between the CMC and the town between 1902 and 1904 over Crittall's management works siren, which he viewed as an assault on his liberty as a businessman.[61] Later, the town's refusal to use Crittall windows for new developments (even choosing a rival metal window firm) and perceived attempts to obstruct the building of Silver End further soured this relationship, and eventually led Francis into unsuccessfully attempting to form his own local government.[62] While the people's voices were to be considered, Francis believed that as a capitalist power should rest with him. His barely concealed disdain for local democracy and public bodies, including his persistent refusal to obey council orders, showcased Crittall's faith in noninterventionist government, private enterprise and limited democracy – again, a

[59] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 45-52; Blake, *Window Vision*, 13-14; CMC, Board Minutes (1888-1904); Share Ledger 1907-1913 (BM).
[60] CMC, Board Minutes (1889-1918); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 53.
[61] Frank Hobson, 'A Siren Dispute' (Essex Record Office (ERO), Chelmsford, T/P 116/6).
[62] *Chelmsford Chronicle* (20 August 1926); *Crittall Magazine* (October 1926); *Braintree and Witham Times* (26 June 1931).

philosophy embodied at Silver End. In advocating his own perception of meritocracy and social justice, Francis was championing his story of upward social mobility: the self-made man was the true embodiment of capitalism, not the idle aristocrat.

If Crittall's rise from obscurity to wealth was extraordinary, Tomas Bata's transcendence was even more remarkable. Also born into a middling family, the ninth generation of Bata cobblers, Tomas claimed to have started working for his father at just six years old and by 14 was apprenticed full-time. Bright but not scholarly, he took over sales at his father's shop and by 15, in 1891, he opened his own unsuccessful workshop with relatives in Vienna. After briefly returning to work for his father, and living in 'economic misery', in 1894 he jointly established his own shoe company with his brother Antonin and sister Anna. In contrast to Zlín, a largely pre-industrial, bucolic town of less than 3,000 people, he dreamed of owning a factory with a towering chimney. 'Human society is divided into two – the masters and the non-masters' he later wrote, 'it was something unheard of that a commoner, and particularly a man of Czech origin, should dare to aspire to anything so grandiose.'[63] In Zlín he plotted his rise to wealth and power, in a region where 93% of companies employed fewer than five people.[64] Bata desired not only material wealth but social recognition. As a pupil he 'fought hard' to be accepted by middle-class German boys but claimed his 'inferiority complex' made him ashamed of his background. 'I wanted to be counted among the gentry, or to become one of them, to try and gain admission into the circle of the select and their more refined, cleaner places of assembly.' As he plotted to expand this fledgling business he was ridiculed locally as a 'bourgeois pauper' and after his second company failed Tomas tried a third time without the

[63] Bata, *How I Began*, 11-20.
[64] Petr Szczepanik, 'A Network of Media in the Bata Corporation and the Town of Zlín', in Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau (eds.), *Films that Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2009), 365.

assistance of his family. A year later, in 1896, he had repaid his creditors and employed around 100 people.[65]

With the business now stable and growing, in 1904 Tomas left for the United States to learn new methods of mass production. He was particularly mesmerised by the seemingly meritocratic, business-orientated American culture he witnessed while working as a shoe operative in New England, and was enthralled by the nation's supposed class fluidity and opportunity for social advancement. In the USA, 'to sell newspapers in the street was a good enough job for the son of even the highest-salaried official in the land, or the offspring of a millionaire.' Where he claimed to have held communist views in his youth, in America he became convinced of the utopian potential of capitalism. Like Crittall, he believed his 'natural liberty' would be found through business success and abandoned his pious and repressive upbringing for a materialistic and freedom-loving philosophy. 'To work for our own was a goal we strove for mainly to satisfy our longing for a better living standard,' he later wrote. As such, he rejected any form of co-operative or democratic production, even with his siblings, believing it limited his personal liberty.[66] Like Crittall, the young 'Czech Ford' extended these autocratic tendencies beyond his business partners, taking aim at the government. He vehemently defended the liberal doctrines of limited government and unrestricted trade. To work successfully, he insisted, he required no support 'from anybody, especially the state. One thing is necessary: to work freely.'[67] As the embodiment of the 'self-made' man, Bata, like Crittall, was keen to endow liberal capitalism with a sense of ingrained justice. Both had benefitted handsomely from the system but recognised it could be misused for exploitative purposes and

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[65] Bata, *How I Began*, 16-27.
[66] *Ibid*, 13-31.
[67] Tomas Bata and Antonin Cekota (ed.), *Knowledge in Action: The Bata System of Management* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 1991), iv.

needed to be remodelled and extended if it was to truly liberate and create universal opulence. By the time Bata died in July 1932, he was worth several millions of pounds.[68] Crittall never reached these heights, but his net worth was at least several hundred thousand pounds when he died in 1935, and probably seven figures.[69]

The utopian communities they built reflected their self-perception and the seemingly unlimited, meritocratic potential of the individual. East Tilbury and Silver End were created as the antitheses of state intervention. The two villages, privately bought, built and managed, were manifestations of an anti-statist mentality formed by their financiers before the war, and an attempt to rectify a damaged political economy from the inside out. In these villages, employees were taught to idolise and emulate their heroic industrial leaders; poverty was merely a 'voluntary state', as the *Bata Record* put it. British Bata presented itself as the champion of meritocratic social mobility, and argued its workforce were also 'capitalists' because they had (compulsory) investments in the company. Tomas Bata, whose speeches were regularly printed in the weekly *Bata Record*, thought poverty a 'lame excuse' and that, in fact, deprivation was 'the best helper' in propelling individuals and societies.[70] This message was regularly repeated. It was claimed all managers started on the assembly line and it was 'only merit that counts in this organisation.'[71] At the CMC, employees were taught that through sheer hard work 'every youngster' had 'the chance of becoming a Guv'nor.' If they 'cultivate the right character, obtain sufficient knowledge and apply your abilities' then 'everyone […] [has] a pathway to promotion and success.'[72] Similarly, Silver End's utopian environment was

[68] *Guardian* (13 July 1932).
[69] The CMC had assets over £3.6m at the time of his death in 1935, when he still held a significant proportion of the company: CMC, Board Minutes (August 1933, December 1935).
[70] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 109-13.
[71] *Bata Record* (8 June, 17 August 1934).
[72] *Crittall Magazine* (August 1925, October 1928).

thought to provide 'maximum opportunities' to 'secure social and educational advantages.'[73] Both villages were presented as libertarian islands where individuals could fulfil their full potential no matter their background. This capacity for upward social mobility was not only thought of as the basis of individual liberty but, as Beveridge put it in 1935, 'in the last resort, it draws the line between citizenship and slavery.'[74]

2. Efficiency as Universal Opulence

Through a *laissez faire* political economy and the specialisation of production, Adam Smith foresaw a world of 'universal opulence which extends itself to the lowest ranks of all people […] a general plenty diffuses itself through all the different ranks of society.'[75] As the prophet of liberal capitalism, Smith argued a non-interventionist state would allow individuals to exercise their 'natural liberty', as the impersonal forces of the market would co-ordinate economic life more efficiently than a centralised or heavily regulated state. Free movement of goods, labour and capital was needed to ensure progressively cheaper commodities, as it allowed increased specialisation and the division of labour. If individuals were free to exercise their innate selfishness and self-interest, what he termed the 'invisible hand', all would benefit. This theory was placed at the core of the liberal-market utopia: a mentality that suppressed one's altruistic tendencies in favour of greed, and thereby ensuring the most effective means of creating common good. 'It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker, that we expect our dinner', Smith famously wrote, 'but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to humanity, but to self-love.'[76] 'Private vices, common

[73] *Ibid* (December 1926).
[74] Beveridge, 'Planning Under Socialism', 13.
[75] Smith, *Wealth of Nations Vol. I*, 10.
[76] *Ibid*, 13; Galbraith, *Economics in Perspective*, 59-69; Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, 36-37.

good', as Immanuel Kant later stated, goes to the heart of the classical liberal worldview and that of capitalist utopianism. By acting on our selfish natures one is forced 'to be a good citizen even if [one is] not a morally good person.'[77] This argument was repeated between the wars to defend capitalism.[78] While socialist utopianism was destined to remain on the fringes of British society in the nineteenth century, Smith's utopianism was incorporated into the heart of industrialising western economies.[79]

The basis for liberal philosophers' opposition to state intervention lay not only in the ideal of personal liberty, but also the belief interventionist governments prevented full productive capacity by placing restrictions on the market. Competition was the basis of commerce, and Smith therefore argued monopolies (including nationalisation) and oligopolies artificially raised prices at the expense of efficiency.[80] Adam Smith did not fully foresee, however, the revolutionary power of science and technology. Writing before the full might of mechanised industrial production, Smith's famous allegory of the pin factory focused heavily on specialisation in production and not the ability of new technology to improve output.[81] Faith in 'progress' through new technology and science was a fundamental aspect of the first 'spirit of capitalism' in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, according to Boltanski and Chiapello: the heroic entrepreneur willing to risk it all to develop the next big leap forward, whose commitment to improving production meant his own selfishness resulted in public good (for example, William Lever and developments in soap). In the interwar years, belief in physical science was coupled with social science, as firms grew and centralised, labour processes were

[77] Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: Harvester Press, 1992), 16-17.
[78] For example, Withers, *Case for Capitalism*, 236-39; House of Commons 161:2473-2512 (20 March 1923).
[79] Quoted in Galbraith, *Economics in Perspective*, 61, 73.
[80] Smith, *Wealth of Nations Vol. I*, 117; Galbraith, *Economics in Perspective*, 64-71, 122.
[81] Galbraith, *Economics in Perspective*, 58-59.

standardised and the 'scientific management' of production was popularised, while mass-produced commodities also came to define 'modernity.'[82] This also extended to architecture and town planning as professionals, often influenced by the modern movement, increasingly embraced functional styles and philosophies, and experimented with new materials and techniques.[83]

As will be discussed in chapters two and three, between the wars this technological utopianism was widespread, and was encapsulated by the likes of Henry Ford and Charles Bedaux who preached the benefits of mass production and mass consumption. Indeed, the concept of 'universal opulence' through competitive capitalism still enchants many on the political right, from libertarian Americans to Conservative politicians in Britain.[84] On the left, however, many have warned of the dangers of technology if privately owned, and these criticisms equally apply to interwar Britain. Belief in an abundance for all is often mocked because, it is reasoned, inequality is a functional aspect of capitalism and technological and technocratic rhetoric disguises the surveillance power of corporations, the 'robotisation' of workforces between the wars, enhanced control over the workforce, and deteriorating working conditions. The resulting 'deskilling' also removes workers' independence and sense of pride, disempowering them and alienating them mentally, emotionally and physically.[85]

Although technological utopianism was not limited to capitalist dreamers, it was particularly popular with them. The dwellings in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), for instance, had fireproof

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[82] Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 8-29.
[83] Discussed in chapter three.
[84] Benko, *Capitalist Manifesto*; Brennan, *Why Not Capitalism*, 87-92; Kwasi Kwarteng *et al., Britannia Unchained*, 4-5.
[85] The literature on this is extensive. See, for example, Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions*, 98-106, 117-26; Terry Eagleton *Why Marx Was Right* (Yale UP, 2018); Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (Profile, 2019).

roofs and glazed windows to indicate their technological advancement, and this trope continued in later literature including socialist texts like Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1887). While leading nineteenth-century British thinkers such as John Ruskin and William Morris were critical of the impact of technology and materialism, some British socialist-libertarians like Oscar Wilde championed this cause, and technology continues to inspire on the political left today.[86] In the Machine Age, socialists identified technology as a means of alleviating workers from toil and realising their full potential, but theirs was the utopia of the producer, not the consumer: material abundance was not their goal. Capitalists often embraced scientific progress to maximise efficiency and control over production, not reduce the labourer's daily struggle. This could, indeed, have anti-utopian effects, as will be explored in chapters four and five. Universal opulence was a by-product of selfish pursuits and not the primary goal itself: a utopia for the factory owner and consumer, not the employee.[87] The prerequisite for universal opulence was therefore not only a noninterventionist state and a free market, but also the continuous revolutionising of production. Modern, unrepressed productive power was, for William Margrie at least, the very essence of humanity and the pinnacle of human intellect.[88] Chapter three will explore these themes further, outlining how many endowed technology with liberating potential, reflected in East Tilbury and Silver End's modernism.

Maximising the productive capacity of private enterprise is a common theme in capitalist utopian literature. Fayette Stratton Giles' *Shadows Before, or a Century Onward* (1893) is an

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[86] Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (Max Maisel, 1915, original 1891), 14; Claeys, *Searching for Utopia*, 117, 151-60. On post-scarcity economics see Aaron Bastani, *Fully Automated Luxury Communism* (Verso, 2019); N. Srnicek and A. Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World without Work* (Verso, 2015).
[87] See also Segal, *Technological Utopianism*.
[88] Margrie, *Capitalist's Utopia*, 15.

early example of a global free-trade eutopia presented as a prediction, which was technologically advanced and prosperous. Like most company villages, in Giles' universe the role of welfare and healthcare was in private hands and (in an extreme form of competition) even meant that physicians were paid by results.[89] Socialist dystopias tended to present capitalism as less authoritarian and far more efficient and plentiful. Novels by British authors before the outbreak of the First World War – such as John Mayne's *The Triumph of Socialism* (1908), Frances Everett's *John Bull: Socialist* (1909) and William Ward's *Shanghaied Socialists* (1911) – took aim at the inefficiencies and recklessness of state ownership.[90] Non-fiction works presenting similar arguments, like mechanical engineer Arthur Dahlberg's *Utopia Through Capitalism* (1927) which argued technology promised a 'practical road to utopia' through greater productivity, leisure and 'social control' (wielded by capitalists).[91] Comparable American works includes Frederick Fairfield's *The Story of the City of Works* (1919) which imagined an authoritarian utopian company town with 'free street cars and telephones', in which conformity was enforced through extensive social surveillance.[92]

Some authors took 'efficiency' to extreme conclusions. Guy Thorne's *And It Came to Pass* (1916) described a post-war capitalist eutopia in which 'liberal education […] matters of intellect and taste' are abandoned throughout the British Empire in favour of 'technical and utilitarian instruction.' 'It was generally accepted as a cardinal theory of efficiency in life that business capacity was the criterion of all capacity', Thorne wrote, and consequently citizens experienced 'undreamt of material prosperity.' The appeal of economic monopolies is rare in

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[89] F.S. Giles, *Shadow Before, or a Century Onward* (New York: Humboldt Publishing, 1893).
[90] John Mayne, *The Triumph of Socialism and How It Succeeded* (Swan Sonnenschein, 1908); Francis Everett, *John Bull: Socialist* (Swann Sonnenschein, 1909); William Ward, *Shanghaied Socialists: A Romance* (Cardiff: Maritime Review, 1911). See also Nobuya Hamada, *An Ideal World* (Berlin: Carl Heymanns, 1922).
[91] Arthur Dahlberg, *Utopia Through Capitalism* (Wisconsin, 1927).
[92] Quoted in Sargent, 'Capitalist Eutopias in America' in Roemer (ed.), *America as Utopia*, 197.

capitalist utopian literature, but rule by 'enlightened' autocratic capitalists (or 'beneficial despotism' as Thorne put it) does tend to feature.[93] Efficiency as universal opulence is undeniably stressed in these novels, but the means of achieving this material Eden breaks with liberal tradition. The emphasis on social control, however, is clear. George Orwell would later argue, in 1937, that the availability of 'cheap luxuries' were 'cheap palliatives' for social change in 'a sort of bread and circuses business.'[94]

Before the Second World War, the goal of 'efficiency' within this literature could also extend to a yearning for racial purity or a genetically superior nation. While this is more closely associated with anti-utopian science-fiction, most famously in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), eugenic paradises were a common feature of utopian literature.[95] It was Herbert Spencer who first coined the term 'survival of the fittest', not Charles Darwin. Spencer, a major exponent of radical individualism, believed in 'weeding out' those deemed socially inferior and gave licence to others to merge capitalist utopianism and eugenics.[96] Margrie's support for segregating the 'feeble minded and hopelessly inefficient' was an extreme example of this faith in efficiency also echoed in his fictional writing.[97] The quest for efficiency could therefore undermine (universal) individual liberty. Contemporaries of Margrie, such as US author Hugh Sanford, advocated a hierarchical capitalist order where class conflict was eradicated and the 'inefficient' were sterilised.[98] In Britain, Margrie was certainly not alone. As Dan Stone has

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[93] Guy Thorne, *And It Came To Pass* (Jarrolds, 1916), 234-42; See also Lewis Dewitt, *A Trip to the North Pole and Beyond Civilisation* (Linwood: Industrial Exchange, 1912).
[94] Orwell, *Road to Wigan Pier*, 82-83.
[95] Joseph Levy, *An Individualist's Utopia* (Lawrence Nelson, 1912); Normal Haire, *Hymen or The Future of Marriage* (Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1927); George Schuette, *The Grand Mysterious Secret Marriage Temple* (Manitowoc, 1931); James Harris, *Pantopia* (New York: Panurge Press, 1930); Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017), 294-316, 365-69.
[96] Quoted in Galbraith, *Economics in Perspective*, 122.
[97] Margrie, *Capitalist's Utopia*, 28; *The Story of a Great Experiment. How England Produced the First Superman* (Watts and Co., 1927).
[98] Hugh Sanford, 'Idealism and the Ideal State', in Sanford, *The Business of Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1924), 718-942.

demonstrated, between the wars British intellectuals like Anthony Ludovici, Karl Pearson and Havelock Ellis took a keen interest in issues of race and eugenics, often with the intention of promoting anti-egalitarian and anti-feminist notions of 'national efficiency.'[99] Eugenics maintained an attraction into the 1930s, whereby campaigns sought to sterilise the 'feeble-minded.'[100] Eugenics demonstrated how a faith in 'efficiency' could move beyond economics, even if this remained on the fringes of capitalist utopianism between the wars.

For the Bata and Crittall families, science and technology were the means humanity could realise utopia. By the early 1920s the CMC had mechanised and atomised the production of metal windows, which had previously been a tailor-made, expensive product made by hand by skilled craftsmen. Having first introduced machinery in 1888, its production was further standardised by the introduction of the fenestra joint in 1909 – a method of strengthening window joints – which simplified construction and used less steel. Francis was resolute that this innovation meant Crittall windows were vastly superior to wooden ones, even if they were more expensive. Not only were they stronger and admitted more light, he also thought them more versatile and beautiful, and would therefore liberate Britain (and the world) from poorly lit rooms with windows that jammed, swelled and failed to properly omit the weather. Meanwhile, his eldest son Valentine (1884-1961) was establishing subsidiaries in North America and, in the process, visited Henry Ford's factories in Detroit to better understand the moving assembly line (the CMC would later install windows at Ford factories). However, the true pioneer of mass production was not Valentine but Walter, a director from 1913 and the creative force behind the company. Like Valentine, Walter had attended the prestigious

[99] Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2002).
[100] Edgerton, *Rise and Fall*, 171-72.

Uppingham School but after failing to become an artist he joined the firm and used his talents to engineer new products and manufacturing systems. Walter standardised production by simplifying components and making them interchangeable, eventually creating the 'universal section' in 1909 which greatly improved individual output and enabled casements to be manufactured by semi-skilled labourers. By 1914, Valentine and Walter had ensured the speed of output and cost of production of CMC windows had fallen. While still a luxury product, the firm's first large domestic order was received in 1910 for new housing estates in Chelmsford, signalling its global expansion in the 1920s.[101]

Tomas Bata's belief that technology could liberate humanity from want was even more profound. 'Prosperity of nations and of everyone depends on their understanding of machines', Bata wrote, 'on how they love their machines and how they get the utmost out of them.' Meanwhile, his successor and half-brother Jan Bata (1898-1965) also championed mass production as the pinnacle of human evolution, superseding what he characterised as inefficient individual craftsmanship. Through machinery, civilisations could 'produce a wealth which men had never imagined possible even in their wildest dreams', he wrote.[102] Having returned from America with the knowledge of how to mass produce shoes, Tomas further mechanised production by introducing a moving conveyor belt, and therefore rapidly transformed the traditional craftwork of his forefathers. He sought to emulate the conditions he experienced in the United States, which he viewed as truly the land of universal opulence. Following a trip to Frankfurt's Moenus AG textile factory, he developed his first line of inexpensive canvas shoes using similar production methods.[103] By the age of 28, he owned a

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[101] CMC, Board Minutes (June-October 1909); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 54-72, 84-91; Blake, *Window Vision*, 14-34.
[102] *Bata Record* (25 May, 6 July 1934).
[103] Bata, *How I Began*, 16-27; Doležalová, 'Social Reconciliation', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 89-90.

large factory that dominated Zlín's skyline. Labour processes were divided and specialised into a system of monotonous tasks, and while these harsher working conditions provoked a strike in 1906, he was able to quickly suppress it by firing the demonstrators and replacing them with unskilled workers, thus further strengthening the value of this technology. By the time his brother Antonin died in 1908, Zlín was rapidly transforming itself into a shoe-producing capital of Europe. By 1914, over 10% of Zlín's population was directly employed by Bata, producing around 3,600 pairs a day. This technological and technocratic upheaval laid the foundation for the firm's worldwide growth.[104]

It was through these feats of production before 1918 that Tomas Bata and the Crittall family believed universal prosperity could be achieved: liberating the world from want with affordable, beautiful and functional products. The architecture, technocratic management and production at East Tilbury and Silver End embodied this optimistic faith in technological progress, but the villages also reflected a belief that government intervention hindered production and affluence. Private provision of housing, healthcare, social security, recreation, commodities and some education represented the ultimate faith that the free market was able to govern society, just as British governments increased their involvement in these areas. 'The duty of an industrial or commercial enterprise is to open the way to fortune to millions', Bata wrote in 1931. 'This can only be attained when every article is manufactured in the place where it can be produced under the most advantageous conditions […] entrenched behind tariff walls, the nations are struggling against each other.' Tomas decried the rise of protectionism in the early 1930s, believing it injurious to all nations and classes, and claimed it hindered his

[104] Meller, *European Cities*, 128-34; Ševeček, 'Company Towns', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 38.

ambition to put shoes on 'a thousand million [barefooted] people in the world.'[105] Where Silver End embodied this faith in liberal capitalism, East Tilbury was an attempt to recapture it.

3. Justice as Unity of Interests

No political economy can compel individuals by coercion, ignorance or duplicity alone, especially one that rests on its claim to maximise 'natural liberty.' The enthusiasm (or at least consent) capitalism induces from those who are not its foremost beneficiaries has long held the attention of scholars. Whether this rests on masking material interests through hegemonic control of the ideological state apparatus by wealthy elites, as Marxists have claimed, or more benign explanations offered by the likes of Max Weber, this thesis does not have the space to fully discuss. Nevertheless, capitalism holds a conceptual attraction in all the major explanations of how it is able to reproduce itself.[106] A political economy constructed on self-interest, however, cannot operate effectively without a strong sense of justice and fairness. Translated into the language of interwar utopianism, this meant a perfect harmony of class interests: what was good for the economic elite, company or boss was also good for the working class or employee; class conflict was the politics of envy, not an intrinsic element of capitalism; and wealth was meritocratically earned and distributed. For some scholars this contested ideological arena is the very basis of historical change. For example, Thomas Piketty has recently argued that 'the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of the struggle of ideologies and the quest for justice.'[107]

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[105] *Bata Record* (3 August 1934).

[106] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (George Allen, 1950, original 1905), 47-78. For example, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Verso, 1997, original 1944), 120-67; Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 35-44; Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (Routledge, 1991, original 1964) 26-53; Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, 205-13, 290. The attraction of capitalism is accepted, even if it is thought a 'false' consciousness.

[107] Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, 1035-36.

Social justice is also the primary lens applied by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005). By adopting Weber's focus on the moral foundations of capitalist economies, they explore the 'powerful moral reasons for rallying to capitalism.' This is precisely how they define the 'spirit of capitalism', as the shifting 'ideology that justifies engagement in capitalism […] legitimises it.' By using management literature between the 1960s and 1990s, Boltanski and Chiapello demonstrate how these justifications, which are often 'barely morally tolerable', permeate into mainstream discourse. Such defences, which have always centred on idealised notions of liberty and self-interest, are essential to maintaining workers' positive involvement. As they rightly argue, justifications that rest on social justice cannot be reduced to 'an illusion with no impact on events in the world' but broadly form a consensus (however reached) of principles mutually agreed upon by a society. The law is just one expression of this form of justice, as justifications also pervade the everyday 'objects, rules and conventions' of life. Like capitalist utopianism, this can often seem 'invisible.' Boltanski and Chiapello present capitalist justifications not as static but in continuous fluidity as they incorporate critiques and adapt to further legitimise the existing order.[108]

This can also be applied before 1945. A harmony of class interests is an almost ubiquitous trait within capitalist utopian fiction and non-fiction. The depiction of a just, class-blind system first emerged in English-language novels in the 1880s following the rise of modern socialism. William Rees' reformed capitalist eutopia, *Co-operation of Land, Labour, and Capital* (1885) was one of the first to paint a future world where capitalists, labourers and consumers are united to bring about greater prosperity for all and eliminate poverty. Other authors also attempted to counter the socialist critique of capitalism into a reformed political economy that

[108] Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 8-11, 57-58, 485-89.

addressed alienation, inequality and destitution, but also maintained private enterprise. Edward Hale's *How They Lived in Hampton* (1888), John Bachelder's *AD 2050: Electrical Development at Atlantis* (1890) and Enoch Johnson's *A Captain of Industry* (1908) all incorporated profit-sharing measures to ameliorate working-class agitation in their fictional universes.[109] Equally in Guy Thorne's eutopia *And It Came To Pass* (1916), a tripling of productivity doubled the wealth of the working class. Greater levels of prosperity and equality, meritocratically distributed, resulted in the disintegration of trade unionism and an end to class conflict.[110]

With capitalism in crisis between the wars, writers of utopian fiction responded by focusing on the ideal of conflict-free, equitable capitalism. The unifying thread remained the attempt to perfect a just system in which all participants accepted capitalism and voluntarily enmeshed themselves into it. The interests of all classes were aligned, to the extent class became transient to the point of non-existence, especially in socially mobile universes. In Wilhelm Griesser's reformed capitalist eutopia *The Welcome Island Story and Laws* (1923), the deportation of radicals and the prohibition of combinations of labour or capital curbed class consciousness and promoted a harmony of interests, while David Fischer's *Latin Blood* (1925) equally painted a congenial relationship between classes.[111] In Oliver Sutter's 1937 novel *The Super-Woman*, the female protagonist established a eutopia in which all class and racial antagonisms end, and the trope of collective harmony continued after 1939 with the likes of Robert Ardrey's *Worlds Beginning* (1944), Haroldson Hunt's *Alpaca* (1960) and Frank Young's

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[109] William Rees, *Co-operation of Land, Labour, and Capital* (Auckland: Upton and Co., 1885); Edward Hale, *How They Lived in Hampton* (Boston: Stillman Smith, 1888); Bachelder, *AD 2050*; Enoch Johnson, *A Captain of Industry* (Boston: CM Clark, 1908).
[110] Thorne, *Came To Pass*, 234-42.
[111] Wilhelm Griesser, *The Welcome Island Story and Laws* (Chicago: Tucker-Kenworthy, 1923); David Fischer, *Latin Blood* (Hollywood: Authors Publishing Corporation, 1925).

Neocracy (1968).[112] Unity through enforced conformity was also a central aspect of Frederick Fairfield's *The Story of The City of Works* (1919). But despite this social peace, most capitalist utopians were vehemently antiequalitarian.[113] A unity of class interests was also a major theme in interwar non-fiction texts. William Margrie's call for cooperation was repeated by Fitzroy William Somerset (Baron Raglan) five years later in his eutopian proposal *If I Were Dictator* (1934). Somerset's social dreaming involved limiting the freedom of the press, introducing harsher punishments for criminals and encouraging cooperation between workers and capital, but also incorporated plans for compulsory sterilisation.[114] In Somerset, we see one example of how the principles of capitalist utopianism overlap: most fiction and non-fiction texts usually contained elements of all three.

As is common in capitalist utopian writing, the classical liberal belief that private vices meant common good was used to argue the prosperity of employers was good for workers. This dynamic between the mutual interest of the individual and the collective was encapsulated by the most famous early capitalist utopia, New Lanark. While Robert Owen eventually shifted away from this early example of welfare capitalism towards the socialist utopianism of New Harmony (1824-1828), his earlier attempt in Lanarkshire was unmistakably an effort to merge individual and public interests in a capitalist setting, through a 'benevolent yet coercive management ethos', as Ophélie Siméon puts it. Under Owen's management, the cotton mill and company village demonstrated that improving working and non-working conditions could increase profits. Over the course of 20 years, Owen incorporated educational programmes

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[112] Oliver Sutter, *The Super-Woman* (Arthur Stockwell, 1937); Robert Ardrey, *Worlds Beginning* (Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944); Haroldson Hunt, *Alpaca* (Dallas: HL Hunt Press, 1960); Frank Young, *Neocracy* (New York: Exposition Press, 1968).
[113] Quoted in Sargent, 'Capitalist Eutopias in America' in Roemer (ed.), *America as Utopia*, 197.
[114] Margrie, *Capitalist's Utopia*, 28; Fitzroy Somerset, *If I Were Dictator* (Methuen, 1934).

(including the first infant school in Britain), recreational facilities, contributory welfare schemes, housing, cheap stores, and from 1816 the 'Institute for the Formation of Character.' High wages and good standards of living were proved to be compatible with profitability, and tens of thousands of visitors flocked to see his marvellous (secular) arcadia.[115] This sentiment continued into the interwar years, and was perhaps epitomised at Bournville where Cadbury's sought to erode 'the unfortunate horizontal divisions into which our industrial life has fallen', as the company put it in 1926, and 'supersede […] class consciousness' through 'the sentiment of common life and purpose.'[116]

Owen's vision, like later utopian capitalist communities, fundamentally rejected philanthropy as its operational base, as this offered no means of reproducing itself. Charity was not thought to provide a sustainable, fair, replicable or meritocratic political economy. For the recipient, the money received was not earned, and therefore philanthropy could not operate as a functional economy. Historians of utopian company villages have often framed their existence as a tussle between expediency and philanthropy, but they were often neither.[117] Utopian capitalists recognised profit making was the best method of creating a workable, lasting system of universal opulence and social justice, especially between the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries when 'enlightened' paternalistic capitalism gained greater traction.[118] William Lever, for example, maintained he 'worked on business lines, and we will have nothing to do with philanthropy': his 'utopia' on the Wirral was built out of self-interest, but the result was common good. Like Lever, Tomas and Jan Bata maintained their approach to business and

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[115] Siméon, *Owen at New Lanark*, 1-39, 158-60.
[116] Cadbury Brothers Ltd., *Bournville 1926: Work and Play* (Birmingham, 1926).
[117] Darley, *Villages of Vision*, 123; Yallop, *Dreamstreets*, 103.
[118] Erik de Gier, *Capitalist Workingman's Paradises Revisited: Corporate Welfare Work in the Golden Age of Capitalism, 1880-1930* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2016).

community-building was 'not philanthropy but common sense'; welfare and incentives were believed to raise production and wages.[119] A mutually beneficial relationship resulted, as Francis Crittall explained in his autobiography:

> Poverty and distress, hunger and sickness – these ills will ultimately be conquered forever, not by philanthropy which can never work on a big enough scale, but by a recognition by all classes that an efficient state can be achieved only by securing to everybody the material necessities which we, in our works and at Silver End, and other employers are providing for their workpeople.[120]

In these villages, the interests of workers and residents were enmeshed with those of the company in a variety of ways (outlined in chapter four) as a means of encouraging loyalty and ideological conformity.

In cultivating a collective consciousness and unity, East Tilbury and Silver End were designed to be vastly superior to other interwar housing projects. Not only were the huge suburbs built by private developers and municipal governments criticised for being single-class 'suburban commuting ghettos', they also came under attack for failing to foster a sense of community among residents. Developments like the London County Council's Becontree estate, which housed over 110,000 people by the mid-1930s, were strongly criticised by politicians, architects and right-wing organisations (not altogether unfairly) for class segregation, poor planning and a severe shortage of social services and amenities resulting in little 'local patriotism.'[121] The building of East Tilbury and Silver End, however, not only sought to solve a housing crisis but to improve all aspects of life, thus demonstrating the superiority of private enterprise over state planning. Unlike municipal estates, in East Tilbury and Silver End there was no shortage of jobs, shops, healthcare, welfare, recreational facilities or schools. However,

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[119] *Bata Record* (8 June 1934); quoted in MacQueen, *King Of Sunlight*, 152.
[120] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 153.
[121] Olechnowicz, *Becontree Estate*, 1-8, 72-93, 115.

where municipal estates took a relaxed attitude towards the management of residents' lives, these company 'utopias' were much more autocratic and this sense of community was strictly engineered through a variety of financial, cultural and political means, explored in chapter four. This was not unique. Company villages were unsurprisingly undemocratic even if they were seemingly benevolent. New Lanark, for example, was largely governed by Robert Owen and designed to breed conformity. Similarly, William Lever offered residents little independence at Port Sunlight and ruled with an enlightened, despotic hand.[122] As these settlements merged economic, social and (usually) political leadership, there was often little room for the individual or collective self-determination of residents.

If we understand utopian settlements 'as an attempt to recapture a lost sense of community or, in the face of social disintegration, to forge new bonds of collective purpose', then these villages did so by adopting Tomas Bata's maxim 'work collectively, live individually.' Capitalist utopians championed individual interests first: social mobility was prioritised over equality, material fulfilment over higher spiritual or ethical goals, and poverty was seen as motivating.[123] Efforts to foster a corporate consciousness therefore focused on the 'traditions, value-systems, ideas and institutional forms' of capitalism, and in propelling the illusion that wage earners in these villages were themselves capitalists.[124] Corporate consciousness could sometimes manifest itself a cult of personality built around the company's leading figure, held up as the benevolent, paternalistic and omnipotent father of the community. Unlike socialism, corporate consciousness appealed to the (male) individual and their presumed innate self-interest, but

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[122] Darley, *Villages of Vision*, 138-44; Claeys, *Searching for Utopia*, 132.
[123] Claeys, *Searching for Utopia*, 129; Smith, 'Bata Estate', 52-68.
[124] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin, 1991, original 1963), 8-11. By corporate consciousness, I do not mean how it has been applied within business studies, which little recognises capitalism as an ideological framework: Keith A. Lavine and Elna S. Moore, 'Corporate Consciousness: Defining the Paradigm', *Journal of Business and Psychology* 10:4 (1996), 401-13.

was imposed collectively through the enmeshment of workers and their families into the ideological apparatuses of corporate life. This enmeshment attempted to foster a 'spontaneous ardour' for the idealised political economy among the working class. Individualisation, however, did not mean greater individuality or self-expression. Paternalism was a vehicle for this corporate consciousness, providing moral justification and helping to establish an imagined, familial community, but as in capitalist utopian fiction the loss of democratic rights was placated by a faith in universal opulence and meritocratic upward social mobility, alongside social security and an abundance of leisure activities. How this collective sense of unity was engineered will be discussed in chapter four, and its breakdown examined in chapter five.

Capitalism, so these companies often repeated, was mutually beneficial for workers and employers; their interests were united, and prosperity was shared by all, although not equally. All members of a firm were deemed to be capitalists, and wealth inequality was simply the difference between the 'haves and the soon-to-haves', with class relegated to legal or personal distinctions.[125] Just as William Margrie envisioned a utopia in which 'every sensible workman would invest in his own firm […] and become a capitalist', the financial enmeshment of residents and workers at East Tilbury and Silver End forced a sense of collective unity.[126] 'The basis of my entrepreneurial work is to turn my employees into capitalists', as Tomas Bata put it.[127] This ideology, and its attempted realisation, was to consume the lives of residents in these 'utopias', but it was also one that failed to account for the agency of residents.

[125] As US Republican Senator Marco Rubio put it in 2011.
[126] Margrie, *Capitalist's Utopia*, 28.
[127] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 215-16.

Chapter Two – Remodelling the Status Quo: The Emergence of Welfare Capitalism

As the Cabinet convened on 2 February 1920, an ominous red shadow hung over the meeting. The blizzard that had battered Britain over the previous few days had subsided, but a more devastating storm was now at hand. Prime Minister Lloyd George anxiously turned to Chief of Air Staff, Sir Hugh Trenchard, and pointedly asked 'how many airmen are there available for *the* revolution?' Mounted machine guns and bombs, he reasoned, could be useful when it arrived. 'There are large groups preparing for Soviet government', the Minister of Labour George Roberts informed his colleagues. Others, too, sounded their own warnings: the coalition government privately painted a vivid, unyielding picture of the nation's domestic troubles. Contingency plans were drafted, soldiers were placed on standby, rifles caches were concealed, and Andrew Bonar Law recommended arming middle-class 'friends of the government.' The fear of a general strike and Bolshevik-style revolution gripped the imagination of the cabinet in the first few months of 1920, but while it was described by one minister as an attack on 'the foundations of civilisation', it was, in fact, just a particular type of civilisation under threat.[1]

The urgent need for reform was not lost on Britain's other major power-wielders, its employers. Sir Allan Smith, Conservative MP and chairman of the newly established Confederation of Employers' Organisations also spoke plainly, reflecting the mood of Britain's capitalists in a private address. 'In the future, and I say the very near future, this country is going to be the cockpit of labour troubles in the same way as Belgium has been the cockpit of military troubles in Europe', he said in October 1921, 'when private enterprise is at stake surely

[1] *Manchester Guardian* (3 February 1920); Keith Middlemas (ed.), Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary Vol. 1: 1916-1925* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1969), 95-102.

it is the time when employers of the country stand or fall as one man.'[2] Smith's opinion was not one to dismiss lightly. He enjoyed a close relationship with Lloyd George and Winston Churchill and was chairman of the International Organization of Industrial Employers (founded in March 1920). His stark warning was not formed in isolation, either. As a leading member of the Engineering Employers' Federation, his proactive defence of the established order came at a time when his counterpart Tom Mann, the general secretary of the highly influential Amalgamated Engineering Union, was openly calling for a peaceful transition to communism.[3] Mann was the chief representative for most Crittall workers.

The revolution many expected in Britain did not occur, but the fears were not unfounded. It was quite possible that mainland Britain could be caught between the syndicalist violence from its eastern border, and the fierce revolutionary nationalism erupting in Ireland. The end of the First World War brought about a realignment in the political landscape, with the Labour Party emerging as the first major British party representing the interests of the manual working class, which after 1918 was wedded (theoretically) to the nationalisation of the means of production, exchange and distribution. The growth of the party, whose membership rose by a factor of eight between 1910 and 1922, was mirrored in the doubling of the unionised workforce during the war to eight million by 1920. While only a seemingly moderate threat to the functions of liberal capitalism, in what was now a truly democratic system of government, the immediate postwar years witnessed less peaceful challenges to the socio-economic order.[4] Isolated

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[2] National Confederation of Employers' Organisations (NCEO), Revision of Constitution, 1921-1922 (Modern Records Centre (MRC), University of Warwick, MSS.200/B/3/2/C259/1); Terence Rodgers, 'Smith, Sir Allan MacGregor', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (May 2008, www.oxforddnb.com).

[3] Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), *Monthly Journal and Report* (April 1921, April-October 1922, MRC MSS.259/AEU/4/6/); Rodgers, 'Allan Smith.' Mann helped found the Communist Party in 1920.

[4] Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire* (Pelican, 1974), 207-9, 237-39; Selina Todd, *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class* (Hachette, 2015), 30. While women under the age of 30 could not vote, and some over 30 too, the Representation of the People Act 1918 tripled the electorate from 7.7 million to 21.4 million: Eric Evans, *Parliamentary Reform in Britain 1770-1918* (Routledge, 2000), 135.

industrial conflicts which occurred during the war, such as those in Clydesdale, now spread. In Glasgow, continued labour strife resulted in the mobilisation of troops and tanks, while later that year rioters torched Luton Town Hall. In May 1920, dockers refused to load the *Jolly George* with munitions set to be used against the Red Army, and two months later the Communist Party of Great Britain was formed.[5] Meanwhile, in response to agitation by miners, the government promised to nationalise the mines (they later regened on this) and offered other concessions, which Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet Tom Jones privately described as 'a cheap insurance against Bolshevism.'[6]

Nonetheless, Britain was more stable than other European nations, especially following the decline of left-wing militancy after 1921. Lloyd George's fear that Bolshevism would sweep through Europe had subsided but was rightly conceived. The rise of right-wing authoritarian regimes in eight European nations before 1929, spearheaded by fascist Italy (1922), confirmed the crisis of capitalism was also a crisis of democracy. By the late 1930s, Britain stood as one of the only functioning liberal democracies in Europe, and despite hardship, was surprisingly politically stable between the wars.[7] The reasons behind this relative stability have long interested historians, and space does not permit me to cover all these varied explanations. There are, of course, some major factors that ground any analysis of the failure of political extremism in interwar Britain. As Andrew Thorpe noted, Britain was sheltered from the worst of the Great War in terms of mortalities, economic destruction and social dislocation. Its empire was extended and its prestige remained intact, while its economy remained functional,

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[5] Todd, *The People*, 33-35; Simon Webb, *1919: Britain's Year of Revolution* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2016).
[6] Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, 80.
[7] Andrew Thorpe, 'Introduction', in Thorpe (ed.) *The Failure of Political Extremism in Interwar Britain* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1989), 2. The others being France (which experienced greater levels of unrest), Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, the Irish Free State, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

if embattled (avoiding, for example the hyperinflation affecting Germany in 1923), and had no serious constitutional crises.[8] Similarly, Martin Pugh has stressed the enduring popularity of the monarchy, which was set above everyday politics; John Benson the importance of greater levels of consumerism; and Jon Lawrence argued the 'brutalisation' of war, the partition of Ireland and labour militancy contributed to a desire for peace after 1921.[9]

However, the extensive historiography on this question has primarily focused on party politics, largely failing to account for the role of employers in absorbing, adapting and responding to criticisms of liberal capitalism. Helen McCarthy maintained the local response by political, educational and religious elites to destabilising influences was vital as they defended pluralist, inclusive values and anchored civil society to political moderation.[10] Julia Stapleton stressed the ideological strength of liberalism across all major parties, while Harry Harmer noted the failure of British communists to unite the left.[11] Ross McKibbin's work has been highly influential. His contention that a coalition of anti-socialist forces dominated politics, associational culture and civil society, consequently depoliticising popular culture, has shaped historians' interpretation of Conservative success between the wars.[12] He highlighted how the working class continued to be wedded to liberalism in the 1920s and outlined the political conservatism of female voters. McKibbin argued political extremism on the left failed to

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[8] Thorpe, 'Introduction', in Thorpe (ed.), *Failure of Political Extremism*, 3-9.

[9] John Benson, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain 1880-1980* (Harlow: Longman, 1994), 204-232; Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post–First World War Britain', *The Journal of Modern History* 75:3 (2003), 557-89; Martin Pugh, *State and Society: A Social and Political History of Britain since 1870* (Bloomsbury, 2017), 275-82.

[10] Helen McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain', *The Historical Journal* 50:4 (2007), 891-912.

[11] Harry Harmer, 'The Failure of the Communists: The National Unemployed Workers' Movement, 1921-39', in Thorpe (ed.), *Failure of Political Extremism*, 29-47; Julia Stapleton, 'Resisting the Centre at the Extremes: 'English' Liberalism in the Political Thought of Interwar Britain', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 1:3 (1999), 270-92.

[12] Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 259-93; *Classes and Cultures*, 127-63; *Parties and People: England, 1914-1951* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010).

materialise in Edwardian Britain because the working *classes* were divided (culturally, occupationally, politically) and unable to reify class consciousness, unlike elsewhere in Europe. This theory has been convincingly extended by Andrew Thorpe into the interwar period, who argued the British working class were weakened by apolitical associational culture, and revolutionary activity was curtailed by an overwhelmingly moderate Labour Party still convinced socialism could only be achieved through the success of capitalism.[13] The role of employers is peripheral in these studies.[14]

Nonetheless, capitalists do feature in the 'corporatist' theory of British political stability between the wars. First proposed by Samuel Beer, but largely attributed to Keith Middlemas, these historians maintain powerful economic groups were incorporated into the heart of political decision-making after 1911, instrumenting a 'corporate bias' within government that ensured party politics was subordinated to the needs of national security and the liberal status quo. The First World War witnessed the creation of institutions like the National Union of Manufacturers (1915), the Federation of British Industries (1916) and the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations (1917) to represent capitalists on national issues, but it was the latter body which, according the Middlemas, formed part of the 'extended state' up until the mid-1960s, alongside its counterpart the Trades Union Congress (TUC). These bodies established contracts with successive governments and became 'governing institutions', with the combined aim of negating serious class conflict. By incorporating the TUC and employers' organisations into national decision making, governments deliberately exerted

[13] Ross McKibbin, 'Why Was There No Marxism in Great Britain?', *The English Historical Review* 99 (1984), 297-331; Andrew Thorpe, '"The Only Effective Bulwark Against Reaction and Revolution": Labour and the Frustration of the Extreme Left', in Thorpe (ed.), *Failure of Political Extremism*, 11-27.
[14] There is extensive historiography on the failure of fascism in Britain. See, for example, Martin Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!' Fascists and Fascism in Britain Between the Wars* (Pimlico, 2006).

significant influence on British businesses in the name of national unity.[15] While this theory has been challenged for assuming the unity of employers, even critics accept the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations (NCEO) held 'unquestionably considerable' power between the wars, and was 'one of the formative agents of modern British social politics': it formed a 'Bolshevism of Capital', as *The Times* put it in 1921.[16]

Claiming to represent employers of over seven million people in 1922, the NCEO became the recognised collective voice of capital on macro-economic issues and labour relations, 'safeguarding the interests of all employers' by lobbying the government, scrutinising legislation and co-ordinating cross-industry opinion.[17] But the power of the NCEO lay not in its centralisation, but its support for a new deal for workers that placed welfare capitalism at its heart. The recognition of shop stewards and cooperation with unions was encouraged immediately after the war, while significant money was spent 'to counter-balance revolutionary propaganda': a two-pronged attempt to incorporate moderate workers into the machinery of capitalism while excluding radical elements.[18] The NCEO urged businesses to adopt welfare measures to improve morale and productivity, including better factory health and safety, canteens, holidays and the rehabilitation of injured workers.[19] Equally as important in the early postwar years was the Federation of British Industries (FBI), established in 1916.

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[15] S.H. Beer, *Modern British Politics* (Faber, 1965), 318-51; Keith Middlemas, *Politics in Industrial Society: The Experience of the British System Since 1911* (Deutsch, 1979). See also Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society* (Routledge, 1989), 286-358. The theory is implied in socialist critiques of the state: Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (Quartet, 1973).

[16] Terence Rodgers, 'Employers' Organisations, Unemployment and Social Politics in Britain during the Interwar Period', *Social History* 13:3 (1988), 315-341. See also James Cronin, 'Coping with Labour, 1918-1926' in James Cronin and Jonathan Schneer (eds.), *Social Conflict and Political Order in Modern Britain* (Croom Helm, 1982), 113-45.

[17] NCEO, Revision of constitution, 1921-1922; *NCEO: A Short Description of its Work* (1932, MRC MSS.200/B/4/3/2); Rodgers, 'Employers' Organisations', 315-18. The NCEO was renamed the British Employers' Federation in 1939, and in 1965 jointly formed the Confederation of British Industry.

[18] Employers' Advisory Council (EAC), Minutes (February 1917-March 1918, MRC MSS.200/F/1/1/).

[19] NCEO, Annual reports 1922-1947 (MRC MSS.200/B/1/7/).

Although it primarily dealt with international trade, before October 1919 it had been deeply involved with government discussions on how to contain labour militancy.[20] The FBI advocated a decentralised welfare capitalism, recognising that open 'class warfare' was a possibility. To establish 'a true spirit of partnership', the FBI argued employers had to ensure better living standards and social security: higher wages, sickness, accident, unemployment and old age securities, and union recognition were all necessary. Social mobility was encouraged through better educational opportunities and internal 'grading.'[21] Welfare capitalism, or an awareness from employers 'that the wage contract or the labour market transaction of popular economic theory were inadequate means of managing, organising or fully utilising a workforce', emerged as a safety valve against revolution.[22] While these were protective measures, a more optimistic form of capitalism was also evident in these proposals as welfarism was thought to erode class tensions.

Employers' organisations were not the only bodies attempting to revive the image of capitalism immediately after the First World War. The British Empire Union (1916), the Anti-Socialist Union (revived in 1918), the Liberty League (1920-1921) and the Middle-Class Union (1919) were formed to protect capitalism and, in some instances, advocate mild reform. The existence of these bodies provides another – ideological – reason for Britain's relative stability; but these organisations were not utopian bodies. Only the Economic League (1919) differed slightly, in that it was formed by leading industrialists, politicians and military figures as a 'crusader for capitalism.' Amid its blacklisting and strikebreaking, it also spread anti-socialist propaganda (originally named 'National Propaganda', it had close ties with the NCEO), organised country-

[20] FBI, *What is the FBI? What does the FBI do?* (1931); Rodgers, 'Employers' Organisations', 318.
[21] FBI, *Reconstruction after the War* (1917); Private Circular: Welfarism (March 1918, MRC MSS.200/F/4/32/1).
[22] Robert Fitzgerald, *British Labour Management and Industrial Welfare, 1846-1939* (Croom Helm, 1988), 3.

wide evening lectures and study circles, and arranged large public gatherings. Between 1924 and 1927 it claimed a combined audience of nearly four million, and often presented eutopian ambitions for liberal capitalism. It focused on the promise of universal opulence, the bedrock of Britain's 'greatness', and the supposed unity of class interests: 'Class-warfare is Ass-Warfare', as it claimed in 1927. It preached that 'every man is a capitalist' and disseminated millions of leaflets that praised profit-sharing schemes in industry. Given that the chairman of the BBC, Lord Gainford, and directors of major newspapers were leading members, it is disappointing that very little is known about the organisation: researchers were denied access to its archive, which was likely deliberately destroyed decades ago.[23]

For historians emphasising the political moderation of the interwar years, the locus of power has therefore mainly centred on the moderation of political leaders like Ramsay MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin, and not the question of why millions of newly enfranchised voters chose the politics of sober restraint (or, indeed, accepted the legitimacy of parliamentary sovereignty at all). Many of the political factors outlined were vital, of course, but as Middlemas argued, we must look beyond the halls of Westminster to understand Britain's relative stability, ensuring the role of businesses are not overlooked. However, as important as his intervention has been, focusing on employers' organisations provides only one aspect of an interpretation that places business at the heart of understanding interwar political moderation. .[24] This approach can be extended by exploring how individual companies sought stability at a local level. The wave of pre-war mergers was resumed and quickened after the war, gradually transforming the British economy from one of small employers to a more professionalised and

[23] Arthur McIvor, '"A Crusade for Capitalism": The Economic League, 1919-1939', *Journal of Contemporary History* 23:4 (1988), 631-655; Christopher Miller, 'Extraordinary Gentlemen: the Economic League, business networks, and organised labour in war planning and rearmament', *Scottish Labour History* 52 (2017), 120-151.
[24] Rodgers, 'Employers' Organisations', 330.

concentrated form of largely unrestricted corporate dominance. In 1880 the largest 100 firms employed less than 10% of national production, but by 1930 this stood at 26%. But even with the 'visible hand' of 'modern' management that came to dominate British industry, as Alfred Chandler outlined, family ownership continued: in 1930, 70% of Great Britain's largest 200 companies still had family members on their boards and many retained the belief that labour relations should be characterised by mutual interest and co-operation.[25] Thus, as firms grew and implemented new forms of corporate management, welfare infrastructures and professionalisation, many retained a traditional sense of paternalism even if it was industrial in scale. British Bata and the Crittall Manufacturing Company (CMC) encapsulated this blend, which was designed to placate class unrest and improve working conditions and living standards.

Concentrating on the lobbying activities of employers' organisations has, therefore, overshadowed the powerful role of localised welfare capitalism that expanded after the First World War. It also somewhat overstates the role and power of these organisations. As Robert Fitzgerald and Terence Rodgers have argued, the FBI and NCEO were fundamentally opposed to greater government intervention and believed reconstruction, and restructuring capitalism, should be implemented by private enterprise. Critiquing this corporatist thesis, both maintain employers' organisations were hopelessly divided, ineffective bodies, ironically because of their commitment to liberalism. If employers resisted government compulsion, it is argued, they certainly would not acquiesce to interference from employers' organisations either:

[25] Barry Eichengreen, 'The British Economy Between the Wars', in Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson's (eds.) *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain: 1860-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 340-41; Leslie Hannah, *The Rise of the Corporate Economy* (Methuen, 1976), 100-15; Perkin, *Professional Society,* 290-93. See Alfred Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Massachusetts: Belknap, 1977).

labour matters continued to be dealt with internally, not in Westminster.[26] The NCEO vigorously defended liberalism, challenging 'artificial' state measures and left-wing propaganda. In fact, there was little these bodies could agree upon except their opposition to centralised power, and as calls for greater public control grew into the 1930s, businesses countered this by claiming 'industrial self-government' was the solution.[27] Class warfare was an intrinsic problem for liberal capitalism, and it was liberal capitalism that would rectify it.

Could capitalism offer the marginalised and alienated some degree of hope, progress and security? When exploring the reasons behind Britain's relative stability between the wars, therefore, we must look beyond the established political parties or traditional centres of power. Industrial peace, even for bodies like the NCEO, would come 'without the intervention of political parties […] it is in the individual industries – in their organisations and in the day-to-day contact in the works – that the most effective and ready means present themselves for developing and applying the spirit of industrial goodwill.'[28] This was echoed by leading interwar politicians. When Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, an industrialist and employer of several thousand, told his Worcestershire constituents in January 1929 that 'no one rejoices more than I do to see these industrial problems taken directly out of the hands of politicians', he was voicing a deeply held belief in liberalism.[29] It is to individual companies we must look, therefore, in order to fully understand how Britain's industrial and social malaise was combatted. By exploring the social landscape created by firms operating outside Britain's major industries, like British Bata and the CMC, we can better explain how employers responded to interwar

[26] Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare*, 5, 212-24; Rodgers, 'Employers' Organisations', 321-25.
[27] NCEO, General minutes (1928-1934, MSS.200/B/3/2/C204/3); *The Industrial Situation* (1931); Daniel Ritschel, 'A Corporatist Economy in Britain? Capitalist Planning for Industrial Self-Government in the 1930s', *The English Historical Review* 106:418 (1991), 41-65; Rodgers, 'Employers' Organisations', 322-30.
[28] NCEO, General minutes (1927-1928, MSS.200/B/3/2/C204/3).
[29] Quoted in Hannah, *Corporate Economy*, 58.

pressures and reshaped capitalism, including in these trades with long histories of labour militancy.

The Growth of Welfare Capitalism after the First World War

While calls to maintain strong government control of the economy were popular after the war, the coalition re-privatised industry and eagerly sought a return to the *laissez faire* world of 1914. Ambitions by the likes of the 'reconstructionists' to significantly reform capitalism, including by regarding businesses 'as public trusts whose existence in private hands is tolerated for certain benefits they confer on the community […] the price of their existence [is] to contribute more and more to the common good', were quickly dashed.[30] Postwar governments 'rapid[ly] scurr[ied] to return to an isolated economic individualism', according to Craig Littler: major government projects like council housing were underfunded, protective duties were mostly dropped, budgets were reduced, control of key industries ended and class reconciliation was pursued in a voluntary, non-interventionist way.[31] As Fitzgerald and others have argued, welfare policies emerged as the primary management strategy used to 'mollify class conflict […] a prophylactic against strikes, work dissatisfaction and resistance to managerial direction.'[32] Despite elements of corporatism creeping into government, the reconstruction and stability of Britain after the war was largely in the hands of unfettered capitalism: for the most part, all three major parties remained committed to liberalism.[33] As giant corporations, trade associations and oligopolies increasingly dominated the economic

[30] Craig Littler, *The Development of Labour Process in Capitalist Societies* (Heinemann, 1982), 99-105.
[31] *Ibid,* 99-105; *Fitzgerald*, *Industrial Welfare,* 43, 203, 227; Pugh, *State and Society*, 214-23, 235-44.
[32] Steven Crewe, 'What about the Workers? Works-based Sport and Recreation in England c.1918–c.1970', *Sport in History* 34:4 (2014), 544-68; Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare*, 19; Helen Jones, 'Employers' Welfare Schemes and Industrial Relations in Interwar Britain', *Business History* 25:1 (1983), 61-75.
[33] Pugh, *State and Society*, 241-43.

landscape by the late 1920s, they were at liberty to continue operating with little interference from national government.

State welfare fell short of major change. Pre-war Liberal welfare reforms were a means of improving national efficiency and promoting social stability, not introducing socialism. The introduction of old-age pensions, very limited unemployment insurance, school reform, labour exchanges and tax reform before the war was interpreted not only as concessions to an increasingly organised and militant labour movement, but also self-supporting initiatives remedying social issues in the national interest. They posed little threat to capitalism but were intended to strengthen private enterprise rather than burden it. The National Insurance Act of 1911, for example, effectively guaranteed workers received back in medical services and sick pay what they paid in national insurance, which was supplemented by employer and some government contributions. National unemployment insurance was extended to the majority of workers in 1920, and other reforms such as widows' pensions (1925) were introduced, while the patchwork of theoretically self-financing Edwardian social welfare was also developed throughout the interwar years.[34] Nonetheless, although state welfare was 'remarkably comprehensive' payments to recipients were generally below subsistence levels and the system did not provide universal cover. Consequently, there was generous room for private provision through friendly societies, corporations, insurance companies and trade unions, in what has been described as a 'mixed economy' of welfare.[35]

As such, after the war firms began to pay more attention to workers' welfare, leisure and recreation. In some of Britain's biggest industries, where welfare had long been a part of

[34] *Ibid*, 158-72, 216-22, 240-41.
[35] Edgerton, *Rise and Fall,* 222-41.

company culture, policies were systematised, expanded and professionalised. Railway companies, for example, introduced reading rooms, social clubs, canteens, allotments, savings banks, 'profit-sharing' schemes, contributory insurance funds and educational opportunities. In metropolitan gas works and the steel industry similar programmes were started. Company magazines were either introduced or given greater importance. In the brewing trade, *ex gratia* benefits were replaced by coordinated policies amounting to industrial paternalism. Many of these companies placed greater resources into tackling health and safety issues, too.[36] This was particularly important as firms grew: welfare acted as a means of bridging the distance between management and labour, and providing a tool for regulating and monitoring workers.[37] Workers' wellbeing had been given greater attention by the government during the First World War, particularly in industries directly involved in the war effort. The Health of Munition Workers Committee (1915-1917), for example, used 'scientific management' to maximise the 'human factor' in production. This meant close attention was paid to combat fatigue, poor productivity, absenteeism and bad timekeeping. After the war, the committee was succeeded by the Industrial Fatigue Research Board, which continued to promote the benefits of welfare in the workplace; its recommendations were widely adopted by businesses in peacetime, believing they would boost morale and efficiency.[38]

This, of course, is not to say industrial welfare was a new concept. Utopian company towns were physical manifestations of this 'enlightened' management and paternalism had long characterised the relationship between agrarian workers and landlords.[39] Works sports teams

[36] Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare*, 8, 44-48, 67-72, 89-94, 137-46, 186.
[37] *Ibid*, 11-16, 107.
[38] *Ibid*, 7-8; Interim Report of Health of Munition Workers Committee February 1917 (The National Archives, Kew, MUN5/92/346/14).
[39] Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare*, 9-10.

were increasingly commonplace in the late-nineteenth and Edwardian periods, as employers tried to inculcate a public-school 'games ethic' to regulate and depoliticise leisure, and in the process stressed the importance of 'fair play', civic duty, health, rational recreation and friendliness.[40] For reasonably little cost to employers and (initially white-collar, male) workers, sport provided an alternative to less productive or threatening pursuits, and solidified cross-class bonds by forging corporate identities.[41] Aided by a dramatic decrease in the average family size (from 5 children in the late-nineteenth century to less than two by 1933) and a seven-hour fall in the average number of hours worked per week between 1919 and 1939, leisure could act as a vehicle for stability or a serious challenge to the status quo. In Germany, for example, around one million were involved in socialist sporting associations between the wars, which formed a powerful, explicitly political rival to workplace recreation.[42] Nonetheless, while sport has been used by at least one historian to explain Britain's interwar stability, welfare capitalism went well beyond games and physical recreation after 1918.[43]

The First World War was, therefore, a turning point in the history of labour relations in Britain, as welfare emerged as an essential management strategy. Newly formed organisations like the Industrial Welfare Society and the National Institute of Industrial Psychology gained a significant following, and furthered the cause of welfare capitalism. Firms throughout the country rapidly extended or started welfare schemes, especially in the manufacturing and service industries. Where sports and social clubs, pensions or other insurance schemes once

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[40] Roger Munting, 'The Games Ethic and Industrial Capitalism Before 1914: The Provision of Company Sports', *Sport in History*, 23:1 (2003), 48-58. As was the case in America: William Littman, 'Designing Obedience: The Architecture and Landscape of Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1930', *International Labour and Working-Class History* 53 (1998), 88-92.

[41] Crewe, 'What about the Workers?'

[42] Stephen Jones, *Sport, Politics and the Working Class: Organised Labour and Sport in Interwar Britain* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989), 77, 164-194.

[43] Jack Williams, *Cricket and England: A Cultural and Social History of the Interwar Years* (Frank Cass, 1999), 124-138.

encompassed only 'staff', they were now offered to all employees. New recreational opportunities were provided, and sporting opportunities diversified. These coincided with improvements in working environments like the introduction of canteens and toilets, as well as better ventilation, lighting and sanitation. Of course, the response by employers hugely varied but by the mid-1920s there was 'an unprecedented' rise in welfarism to the extent that by the 1930s it constituted a 'whole programme' for British industry, according to Helen Jones.[44] While profit-sharing was rare (actually declining in the 1930s), social security schemes were common as employers offered contributory pensions, sick and injury pay, unemployment insurance and health cover. Some even provided on-site doctors, dentists and nurses.[45]

Industrial welfare promised to be the panacea for a host of post-war problems, not least a more organised and militant working-class movement. Through internal management of social clubs and welfare schemes, industrial paternalism bestowed upon employees a degree of control and agency they had lost in production. Employers could therefore counterbalance their growing control in production by surrendering some control in non-productive areas.[46] A mutually beneficial relationship was therefore possible, in which wage earners gained a degree of economic and social security – the fear of destitution having been a crucial factor in strikes and work dissatisfaction – greater leisure and educational opportunities, higher levels of comfort and safety at work, and reduced conflict with their employer. Capitalists, meanwhile, weakened militancy, improved loyalty and morale, reduced labour turnover, attracted a better class of candidates, incentivised employees, improved the health of their workforce and productively shaped non-work time. This amounted, therefore, to an overall disciplining of the

[44] Crewe, 'What about the Workers?'; Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare*, 13-20; Jones, 'Employers' Welfare Schemes.'
[45] Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare,* 9-10; Jones, 'Employers' Welfare Schemes.'
[46] Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare,* 9-16; Jones, 'Employers' Welfare Schemes', 72.

workforce through use of the carrot, not the stick, while also providing plenty of marketing material. Not only was industrial welfare believed to improve productivity and profits, but it was also assumed to pay for itself.[47] In short, the proliferation of company welfare schemes transformed and sustained liberal capitalism between the wars.

The Crittall Manufacturing Company's Welfare Capitalism

The CMC perfectly symbolised this transformation within British capitalism from *ex gratia* paternalism to a professionalised infrastructure incorporating all employees and their families. As was typical, team sports were introduced first, with the formation of Manor Works Athletic Club in 1898. Francis Crittall believed football was a 'tonic' that helped *men* stay physically and mentally healthy, and the club used the land behind his large estate outside Braintree as its playing field. Cricket, football, quoits, bowls and cycling clubs were funded by a penny-a-week subscription, along with a reading room, with Francis assuming the role of president.[48] Sport was seen as a way of improving co-operation between management and staff, but was also an enforced unity as membership was compulsory. Unlike most small employers, Crittall also provided some social security before 1914. Reflecting his autocratic personality, from 1899 strict fines for lateness and other offences were used to finance the athletics club and sickness fund, while small bonuses were awarded for continuous attendance over four weeks. Sickness money was issued solely by Crittall and required a doctor's certificate. Discipline therefore

[47] These themes are explored in a host of works including: Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare,* 13-20, 207-8, 212; Jones, 'Employers' Welfare Schemes', 61-70; Jones, *Politics and the Working Class*, 44-50, 59-67; Glucksmann*, Women Assemble*, 96-98; Munting, 'Games Ethic', 48-51.

[48] CMC, *Manor Works Employee Handbook* (Braintree, 1899); *Crittall Magazine* (September 1925); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 35-38.

functioned alongside incentives, social security and rational recreation, which paid for themselves.[49] This was a philosophy that continued and expanded between the wars.

Employee wellbeing also incorporated safety and healthcare. The new Manor Works factory built in 1894 was, according to Crittall, designed to maximise comfort as it was 'properly heated' and used modern machinery. Before the outbreak of war, his higher-than-average wages were supplemented by medical and dental care, and a small social club for salaried employees.[50] This was extended in wartime. With the introduction of roughly 1,000 women into the CMC workforce, a welfare department was established to maintain their health and wellbeing and impose industrial discipline. Meanwhile, summer fetes continued at Francis' estate.[51] This was not limited to the CMC. Within the munitions industry alone there was a proliferation of welfare measures, but Crittall had been instrumental in normalising such practices in Essex.[52] The East Anglican Munitions Trust, a partnership of 27 munitions-producing firms, was formed soon after the war to provide convalescent homes, healthcare, educational opportunities, disability benefits and funeral expenses to former munitions workers. By 1961, when the fund was exhausted, almost £35,000 had been distributed, although mostly after 1945.[53]

This surge in welfarism was a considered reaction to rising class conflict. The CMC had not been immune during the 'Great Unrest' (1910-1914), a period when some unions embraced syndicalism and strikes were increasingly common, peaking at 40.9 million lost workdays in

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[49] CMC, *Employee Handbook*.
[50] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 68, 119; Blake, *Window Vision*, 23-33.
[51] *Crittall Magazine* (January, September 1925); Blake, *Window Vision*, 37.
[52] Her Majesty's Stationery Office, *The Official History of The Ministry of Munitions Vol. 5* (Sussex: Naval and Military Press, reprinted 2012), 65-76.
[53] Records of East Anglian Munitions Trust (Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, T/A272).

1913.[54] A week-long strike erupted that year over the standardisation of work processes and the hiring of an unpopular manager. At its heart, the clash was over the depersonalisation of labour relations following the introduction of methods of control such as clock cards, which were deemed to threaten wages and worker independence.[55] The strike achieved wage guarantees and the removal of the new manager, but failed to prevent the regimentation of work practices or the standardisation of production methods.[56] Crittall workers did, however, attain union recognition. Before 1913, Francis Crittall had believed union members 'extremists' that 'threatened […] the fabric of society', and this was reflected in his dealings with union activists, having sacked leading members of the Braintree Brass Workers' Union in 1909 for disruptive canvassing, resulting in poor press for the company.[57] Nonetheless, union strength gathered pace in the workshops and the strike was damaging for the company, highlighting the potent potential if poor relations continued. Following successful talks with Workers' Union, the CMC became one of the only major engineering firms to accept a closed shop union. All employees hired after August 1914 were obligated to join an affiliated union, although this was suspended in wartime and reinstated in May 1919.[58] The dangers of a strike, of failing to form a co-operative spirit between management and labour, was deemed far greater than incorporating collective bargaining. A system of shop stewards and guaranteed minimum wages was a small price for achieving the ultimate prize of 'no restriction of output' – a clause placed centre-stage in workers' contracts.[59] Skilfully enmeshing unions and local politics

[54] Pugh, *State and Society*, 188-90.
[55] *Crittall Magazine* (October 1925); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 165.
[56] Workers' Union (WU), Annual Report (1914, MRC MSS.126/WU/4/1/9-22); Blake, *Window Vision*, 48-49.
[57] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 159-65.
[58] *Crittall Magazine* (June 1926); Blake, *Window Vision*, 48-49.
[59] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 159-65; CMC, *CMC Works Handbook* (Braintree, 1948).

emerged as a vital component of CMC labour management, as will be discussed in chapter four.

Welfare capitalism was deemed more pressing given the rapidly expanding and increasingly powerful unions after the war. The CMC workforce was affiliated to three. The Workers' Union, formed in 1898, was a general union representing unskilled and semi-skilled labourers. It had experienced tremendous growth, from just 26,000 members in 1913 to over 500,000 by 1919. Allied to the Labour Representation Committee in 1900, it was explicitly dedicated to replacing private enterprise with co-operation.[60] The Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), meanwhile, was the voice of skilled workers at the CMC and exerted considerable influence over a key British industry. The product of a merger between 18 unions in 1920, the AEU had around 460,000 members in 1920 and, even more than the Workers' Union, had hostile anti-capitalist ambitions.[61] The third union, the National Society of Brass and Metal Mechanics, was far smaller and less influential. One of the crucial challenges for the CMC was managing an organised and politically conscious working class. Cooperation and integration were crucial means of doing so, and Francis was so convinced enmeshment was a tempering force that the CMC was forced to resign from the Engineering Employers' Federation in 1919.[62]

The need to maintain harmonious relations was heightened by a business model that embraced year-round mass production and market dominance. It was vital production never ceased; as Francis put it, any strike was 'suicidal to the business.'[63] Although great strides were made before the war to simplify and mechanise production, steel windows were still an

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[60] WU, Annual Reports (1913-1920, MRC MSS.126/WU/4/1/9-22); *Rules of the Workers' Union* (Birmingham, 1926).
[61] AEU, *Monthly Journal* (February, June 1921).
[62] Blake, *Window Vision*, 49.
[63] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 159-66.

expensive, luxury item made by skilled craftsmen, and work was largely seasonal. This had changed by 1918. Wartime armaments contracts greatly increased the firm's mechanisation, and it was able to largely eliminate manual craftsmanship. Initially, the CMC continued to produce windows for military buildings, as well as steel furniture; however, sensing an opportunity during the munitions crisis of 1915, Crittall co-founded the East Anglican Munitions Committee with other firms, and was able to secure its first contract in the summer of 1915 for 200,000 18lb shells.[64] Crittall claimed to have been incensed not only by the shortage, but the 'dictatorial' oligopoly a few firms held over government contracts. He accused them of charging exorbitant rates and praised East Anglican firms for reducing these costs, eventually cutting them by more than half. In his autobiography, he strongly denied war profiteering and painted himself (and private enterprise) as the saviour of war effort:

> It was the advent of mass organisation of private firms that relieved that condition; it was private enterprise and not the national factories that produced such floods of munitions […] it was private firms, such as those in East Anglia, that taught the Government their business and particularly how to produce shells at the least cost to the national finances.[65]

The whole incident strengthened his conviction that capitalism needed genuine competition to thrive, and his overwhelming belief in the superiority of private enterprise.

The war propelled the firm to new heights. By 1918, it was supplying around £800,000 of armaments, windows, machine-gun mounts, gun boxes and metal furniture.[66] The workforce also grew, from several hundred in 1914 to roughly 2,000 at its peak.[67] Wartime production facilitated technological advances and labour-saving methods in production; profits were used to build a new engine house, a laboratory and the largest brass foundry in the country. Its

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[64] *Ibid*, 107-9; Blake, *Window Vision*, 32-8; Crosby, 'Silver End Model Village', 71-72.
[65] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 91-98.
[66] *Ibid*, 103-5; CMC, Board Minutes (January 1917); Blake, *Window Vision*, 36-37.
[67] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 103-4; Blake, *Window Vision*, 37.

assets more than quintupled in value between 1912 and 1924.[68] When government contracts ended in May 1919, the CMC was well-placed for rapid expansion with its lighter and better-quality steel windows. With mass production soon in full-swing, after the war Crittall windows cost one-third their pre-war price and were now cheaper than their timber competitor.[69]

Realising post-war reconstruction, particularly housing, was a major national challenge and a lucrative opportunity, the CMC's primary goal when peace arrived was the standardisation of window production and window design. Francis gave evidence to the influential Tudor Walters committee (1916-1918, discussed further in chapter three) and Walter Crittall lobbied the government and architects, helping to popularise the concept of standardisation. Soon after, a flood of orders poured in from municipal and private housebuilders. By the late 1920s it was probably the largest window manufacturer in the world, supplying around 20% of new houses built in Britain. Meanwhile, the standardised and mass-produced 'Universal Casement' was used widely in offices, shops and public buildings.[70] This success was built upon a huge expansion and reorganisation of the production after 1918. Work on a new factory in Witham began in 1919, seven miles from Braintree, and from May 1920 was used exclusively for the mass production of windows. Manor Works in Braintree was simultaneously reorganised to improve efficiency and output, using the latest technology and equipment, and in 1922 another smaller factory was built near Maldon.[71] While Braintree experienced periodic expansion, where built-to-order products were made, Witham became a vital cog within Crittall operations: in 1923 the factory was producing 1,500 windows a day, doubled in size in

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[68] CMC, Board Minutes (July 1919, March, October 1920, September 1924); Debenture Holders (March 1913); Blake, *Window Vision*, 37-38. Detailed accounts are only available after 1924 when CMC went public.
[69] CMC, Board Minutes (May 1920); Blake, *Window Vision*, 40-41.
[70] CMC, Board Minutes (September 1920); *Crittall Magazine* (April 1925); Blake, *Window Vision*, 40-43, 70-72; Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 2, 13-14.
[71] CMC, Board Minutes (January 1921, February 1925); Blake, *Window Vision*, 39-42; Crosby, 'Silver End Model Village', 72.

1925 (to 4.5 acres under one roof), and by 1926 processed 20,000 metal bars a day and held 60,000 windows in stock. The Maldon factory, too, tripled in size between 1922 and 1926.[72]

Another crucial development was international expansion. Francis Crittall had pursued this before 1914, but war had stalled his global ambitions to conquer the 'promised land of world markets.'[73] A free-trader to his core, before the war subsidiaries had been established in the United States and Canada, and agency agreements covered Argentina, China, Japan, Korea, Manchuria, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Hong Kong and the Indian subcontinent. Although this had been a small part of the business, the development of 'tropical' windows for humid climates and cheap steel doors meant CMC exports flourished. Flushed with cash and eager to exploit a technical lead, subsidiaries or agencies were soon extended to Egypt (1923), India (1923), South Africa (1923), Australia (1924), Trinidad (1925) and New Zealand (1926), and agreements also covered Burma, Malaysia and Singapore. Almost all manufacturing took place in Essex, and was then exported to 72 countries on five continents, although small factories, largely for assembly, were built in Durban, Delft, Buenos Aires and seven other locations by 1926.[74] Exports were crucial because they counteracted the seasonality of window demand and maintained year-round employment. What had been a minor aspect of the business before 1914 now played a far greater role in the company's prosperity, and by the late 1920s a third of production was for export.[75] Image 3.1 encapsulates the CMC's sense of ambition, but also its utopian faith that free trade brought universal prosperity and progress.

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[72] CMC, Board Minutes (May 1925); *Crittall Magazine* (June 1926); *Daily Mail* (7 September 1926).
[73] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 91.
[74] CMC, Board Minutes (March, November 1923, January, April 1924, February 1925); *Crittall Magazine* (January 1925); Blake, *Window Vision*, 62-71.
[75] *The Times* (24 September 1928); Blake, *Window Vision*, 70-71.

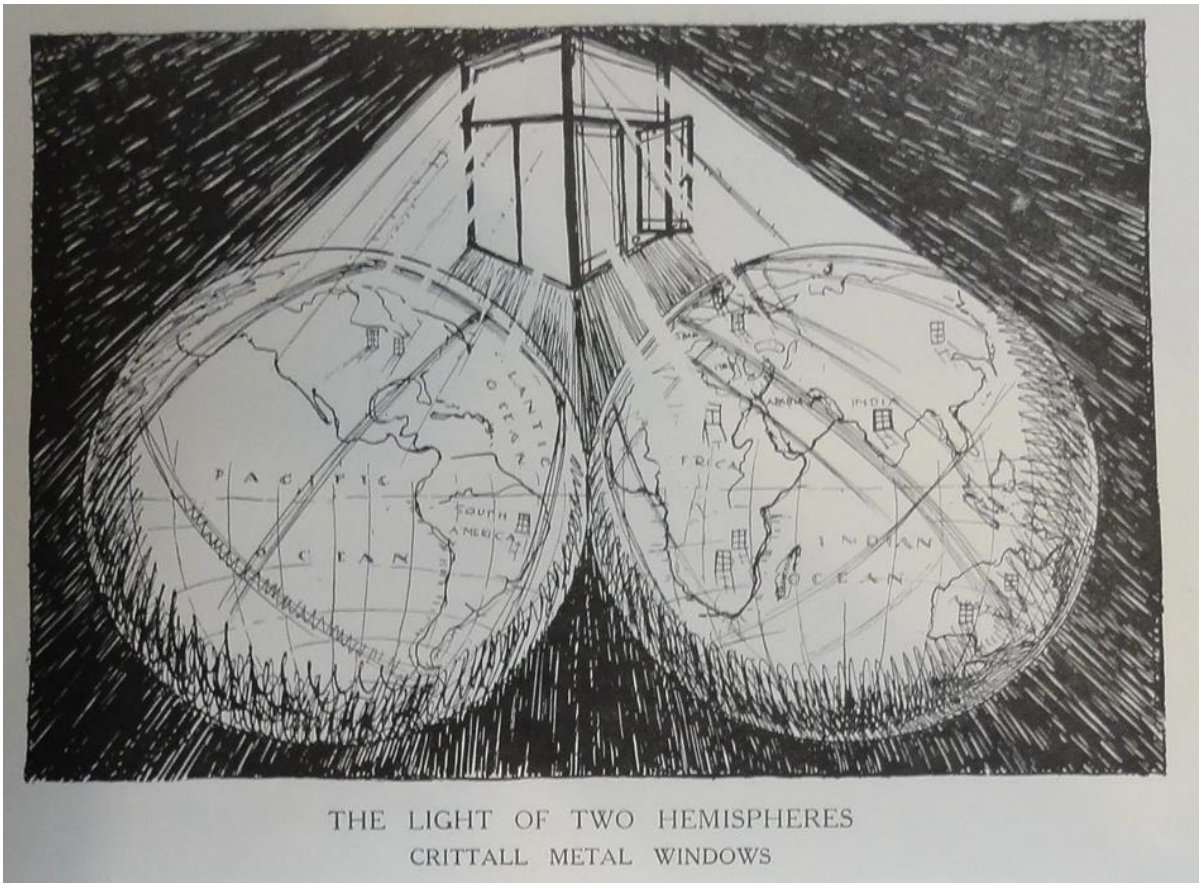

Image 3.1: 'On the CMC organisation, the sun never sets': at its height, the Crittall empire stretched across the globe (*Crittall Magazine* (June 1926))

Despite a slump in 1921 that significantly impacted the British economy, the firm performed handsomely. Between 1922 and 1924 sales doubled, between 1924 and 1926 assets doubled (to over £1m), and between 1923 and 1926 net profits grew by a factor of ten (to £114,085).[76] While employing roughly 1,000 employees immediately after the war, by 1925 this had leapt to over 3,000.[77] Increasingly struggling to keep up with demand, this rapid acceleration was aided by a successful initial public offering of £450,000 (£200,000 ordinary voting shares) in 1924. Having worked intensely to wrestle absolute control of the company just a few years before, this was a bold and agonising decision for Francis Crittall. Nonetheless, the loss of control was, as he put it in 1934, 'more apparent than real.' There was no change of directors

[76] CMC, Board Minutes (December 1923); Statement of Accounts (September 1926); *Daily Mail* (7 October 1924).
[77] Valentine Crittall, *To the Electors of the Maldon Division of Essex* (Braintree, 1923); *Crittall Magazine* (January 1925); Blake, *Window Vision*, 46.

or management, and the business continued to be run not only by Francis as governing director and Valentine Crittall as managing director, but also Walter Crittall, Frederick Walker (Francis' son-in-law), Cecil Rogers (a relative of Ellen Crittall) and two long-serving family allies. The immediate family still held over 41% of voting shares and 30% of preference shares after its public flotation.[78]

The company's welfare infrastructure also greatly expanded. The powerful welfare department that was formed after the war gained new responsibilities and authority. The monthly *Crittall Magazine* was started in January 1925, edited by senior management, including Walter, with the aim of 'fostering a spirit of comradeship and co-operation' at the firm.[79] Not only did the department aim to develop *esprit de corps*, it also involved itself in union negotiations and monitored labour issues. So central did this increasingly technocratic institution become to CMC operations that by 1926 it also oversaw education, training, health and safety, recreation and events, canteens, medical examinations, probation, savings funds and juvenile development. Nevertheless, contributory subscriptions meant the CMC only spent around £3 per employee, per year on welfare.[80] In a few short years, 'welfare' transitioned from embodying the occasional football tournament, to becoming the central vehicle for managing workers' morale, healthcare, social security and professional development.

A key area of expansion was sport and social activities. After December 1926 the welfare department took control of all such activities, including dances, concerts, dinners, games nights and competitions, which became a regular features of company life and were usually attended by Crittall family members. The white-collar 'staff club' expanded, while parties and balls were

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[78] CMC, Board Minutes (December 1924); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 113-14; John Crittall interview with Thea Thompson (1974-77, British Library C707/518/1-2).
[79] *Crittall Magazine* (January, April 1925). The magazine was terminated in October 1929.
[80] *Crittall Magazine* (June, September 1926); CMC, Board Minutes (October 1924-October 1927).

also organised for female staff. Separate parties were organised for factory workers, which were hosted in the works' canteen and presided over by senior management.[81] The social club, which had been founded in 1899, was rehoused in a large purpose-built two-storey building in Braintree in October 1926 (not long after the General Strike) and included a canteen, bar, dance hall (the largest in town), stage, billiards room and facilities for table tennis, badminton and squash. An extensive library was built, and at its opening ceremony Valentine Crittall reiterated the firm worked 'for the advantage not only of the shareholders and directors, but all those who work for the CMC' (even if divisions were etched into its makeup through separate social spaces for staff, men, women and directors).[82] In Witham, a small sports club was opened in April 1925.[83] In Braintree, a permanent recreational field on the outskirts of the town was completed in August 1923. The 17-acre site accommodated football, cricket, tennis, hockey and athletics, and included grandstands that could hold 7,000 people by 1925: it was 'the Garden of Eden' as one manager put it.[84]

Employees were quick to take advantage of these opportunities. A mixed-gender tennis club was formed in 1924 and in 1925 the company endowed it with grass courts and a pavilion designed by Walter Crittall. A bowls green also opened a few months later.[85] Workers and their families were urged to support Crittall sports teams, especially its football club which was central to the company's identity. The welfare department even arranged football matches during the General Strike to ensure the 'cordial co-operation of all employees.' A mixed-gender hockey club was established in 1925, an interdepartmental cricket tournament was started in

[81] *Crittall Magazine* (January-September 1925, January 1926); CMC, Board Minutes (December 1925).
[82] *Crittall Magazine* (July, November, December 1926).
[83] *Ibid* (May 1925).
[84] *Crittall Magazine* (May-November 1925); Blake, *Window Vision*, 52-54.
[85] *Crittall Magazine* (February, June, July 1925).

1926, and an angling society and rifle club also counted a small number of employees. Athletics expanded with the opening of the Braintree sports ground and the CMC took a central role in county competitions, hosting the Essex County Sports Championship in 1925, which saw 6,000 people attend.[86] The annual company sports show, which was suspended during the Great War, resumed in August 1920 by welcoming 5,000 people. These events also included agricultural shows, music, dancing, firework displays and a miniature railway by the middle of the decade, and in 1926 8,000 people attended.[87]

Welfare outside the workplace was matched inside. Safety committees were formed in all factories in 1926 and canteens were expanded to provide healthy and cheap meals throughout the working day. A week-long annual holiday in August became a paid holiday almost immediately after the General Strike in 1926, 12 years before legislation made this compulsory. The CMC labelled itself 'one of the most progressive firms in the country' upon its introduction.[88] By the mid-1920s company education schemes were also formalised, with free evening classes aimed at younger male employees ranging from architecture and woodworking to mathematics and salesmanship. From 1926, female employees could also attend, and prizes were awarded to the highest achievers.[89] Semi-formal pre-war sickness funds were schematised into a system of social security, too. A contributory benevolent fund was initiated in 1919, while healthcare for employees and their families was provided by a contributory

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[86] *Ibid* (February-November 1925, July, August 1926); CMC, Board Minutes (May 1925).
[87] *Crittall Magazine* (September 1925, July, October 1926).
[88] CMC, Board Minutes (September 1925); *Crittall Magazine* (May, July 1925, July 1926); Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body: Beauty, Health, and Fitness in Britain 1880-1939* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 294-95: the Holiday with Pay Act (1938) introduced a week's compulsory paid leave for around 11 million workers, but many firms had already adopted this policy.
[89] *Crittall Magazine* (March 1925, April, October 1926).

hospital fund established in November 1922, which not only covered local infirmary costs but enabled the CMC to employ two nurses and a dentist by 1926.[90]

An eye-catching feature was the introduction of a five-day, 45-hour working week in 1926. After a three-month trial in 1925 was declared an 'unqualified success', in July 1926 weekend work was abolished. It made the CMC one of the first companies in Britain, and probably the first large firm, to implement a five-day working week for both factory workers and white-collar staff (the latter from December 1926).[91] The new policy, which reduced average working hours by only two, was less radical than first appeared but certainly boosted the CMC's public image. Nonetheless, the move was backed by the unions, and Francis later proudly claimed, on numerous occasions, to have pioneered the policy months before Henry Ford introduced his widely publicised five-day 40-hour week in October 1926.[92] As plans to build Silver End were underway, the company had established an extensive framework to ensure the health and wellbeing of its employees and their families. A combination of these measures appears to have healed any animosity that had existed in the previous decade and realised the changes employers' organisations had promoted to supress unrest. The impact of these changes will be assessed in the final two chapters, but after 1913 the CMC experienced no major conflict for over two decades: a unity of interests between capital and labour looked lastingly possible. The stage was set, then, for this practical idealism to radically expand with the building of Silver End.

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[90] *Ibid* (July 1925, February 1926); Blake, *Window Vision*, 54.
[91] *Crittall Magazine* (July 1925); CMC, Board Minutes (December 1926); *Daily Mail* (8 September 1927); Blake, *Window Vision*, 52.
[92] *Daily Mail* (11 May 1928); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 157; AEU, Letter Book (1925-1936, MRC MSS.259/AEU/3/1); Frank de Vyver, 'The Five-Day Week', *Current History* 33 (1930), 224: it had been a Ford policy since March 1922, but only made permanent in 1926.

Bata's Welfare Capitalism

Taking a wide lens, the situation in Czechoslovakia after the First World War was like that of Britain. The polity that emerged after independence is often seen as the major interwar success story for liberal bourgeois capitalist democracies in Europe, before the nation was betrayed by its Western allies in 1938. The First Republic of Czechoslovakia modelled itself on Western democracies and was socially progressive: for almost two decades it was a flourishing multi-ethnic democracy that introduced secret ballots; universal suffrage which did not discriminate based on sex, race, religion or property; fair and equal treatment for minorities; freedom of speech, the press and religion; an independent church; and legal sexual equality. The republic was a loyal, active and non-aggressive member of the League of Nations. Coupled with land reform, the abolition of aristocratic privileges, social security measures, an emphasis on workers' rights and a series of multi-party coalitions, from the ashes of the Austro-Hungarian Empire a progressive, industrialised, liberal nation emerged in remarkable time.[93]

Nonetheless, unlike in Britain where communism posed a lurking but unrealised threat, the challenges capitalism faced in Czechoslovakia were more pronounced. National independence had effectively been guaranteed because of communist support within the Social Democratic party. Following widespread unrest in January 1918, which sought to replicate the October Revolution, military mutinies in February and a breakdown of civil disorder in March, the threat of a Soviet-style uprising was not insignificant. Returning prisoners of war from Russia, radicalised and optimistic, helped swell far-left activity in Czechoslovakia. With short-lived revolutionary republics formed in neighbouring Hungary (March-August 1919) and Bavaria (April 1919), Tomas Masaryk's centrist and moderate socialist government prioritised the

[93] Vera Olivova, *The Doomed Democracy: Czechoslovakia in a Disrupted Europe, 1914-1938* (Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972), 19, 75-89, 111.

stability of the nation in the early years of the Republic. A series of crises caused by pockets of revolutionary activity shook the nation, including strikes and protests in Bohemia (May 1919) and Slovakia (June-July 1920), the Slovak Soviet Republic (June-July 1919) and a general strike (December 1920) by almost one million people. Although this immediate threat subsided by 1921, when Soviet Russia abandoned the aim of world revolution, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia sought power by peaceful means. By November 1925, the party was the second largest in the Czechoslovak parliament.[94]

Like Masaryk, whose family was later 'very close' to the Batas, Tomas and his half-brother Jan shared the president's strong anti-communist stance.[95] While Tomas claimed to have been attracted to socialism in his youth, this was most likely for propaganda purposes as he painted a revelatory conversion from 'collectivist' beliefs to capitalism. By 1911, while on a business trip in London, his conversion was supposedly completed, and he concluded capitalism was decidedly 'in tune with the laws of nature and humanity.' On the other hand, he shared Masaryk's views on aristocratic privileges and land reform, believing firmly in creating an industrial meritocracy.[96] His 'hatred' for communism was heartfelt; his son, Thomas Bata, wrote that he once defended Zlín from communists with a shotgun. He used his company's extensive media power in the town to portray left-wing opponents as a common enemy and a threat to prosperity. Bata's critics were painted as workshy, immoral, destructive, uncivilised, drunk or mentally challenged. Employees caught attempting to unionise were often dismissed and removed from company accommodation.[97]

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[94] *Ibid*, 53-55, 103-16, 126-37, 150-58.
[95] Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 41-44.
[96] Bata, *How I Began*, 27-31; Anthony Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 5, 52-54, 74, 114, 132.
[97] Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 123, 275-84; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 213; Martin Marek and Vit Strobach, 'Identity, Discipline and Order' in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 58-59.

Tomas and Jan, like Francis Crittall, were absolutely committed to free trade. Before the rise of protectionism in the early 1930s, successive Czechoslovakian governments had pursued an outwardly internationalist policy from 1922 and sought to normalise open border trading. It was the first nation to resume official contact with Germany, re-establishing trade in June 1920. Similar economic and political treaties with Yugoslavia and Romania – the security alliance known as the Little Entente – were also signed and extended in the early 1930s. There was a pressing need to reduce trade friction: with the fragmentation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire a home market of over 50 million (1910) was reduced to less than 14 million (1921), and Czechoslovak exports, largely textiles and leather goods, needed global markets. By 1928, the republic had trade deals with most European nations, including Soviet Russia, and counted Britain as one of its largest consumers.[98] As mayor of Zlín, Tomas introduced low taxes (especially for businesses), limited government spending and restricted social security. He dreamt of a 'one-world economy' and categorically rejecting any form of price fixing or manufactures' agreements, deeming competition a moral duty and a form of Social Darwinism.[99]

Bata's vehement anti-communism was not born in isolation; Zlín was not sheltered from postwar political turbulence. Like Crittall, Tomas had sought to unionise his workforce with the hope of creating an apolitical platform to boost efficiency and corporate spirit, but in realising the socialist ambitions of union leaders he ended his dalliance.[100] Moravia was largely an industrialised and advanced capitalist region by 1918, but 'family socialism' was popular with

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[98] *The Economist* (8 December 1928); Olivova, *Doomed Democracy*, 117-19, 128, 168-75.
[99] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, iv, 79, 120-21; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 28-29, 61, 201, 320-24; Ševeček, 'Company Towns', 45, Antonie Dolezalova, 'Bata's Search for Social Reconciliation in the Changing World of Social Justice', 99, and Theresa Adamski, 'Bata's Zlín: Space for the Individual Collective?', 237, in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*.
[100] Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 274-75; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 69-70.

rural migrants who moved to Zlín for work and nearby industrial regions like Rosice (coalmining) and Hodonin were known for their left-wing militancy.[101] In the postwar instability, a time when agricultural production was 40% of 1914 levels (1918) and unemployment was roughly 25% (1922), Zlín was governed by communists for a short time.[102] Bata, now the largest employer in Zlín, sought to 'depoliticise' Zlín by forming his own pro-business party, the Batamen. By 1923, the party claimed a majority of seats in the town and Tomas was indirectly elected mayor, a position he held until his death.[103]

The political control Tomas assumed in 1923 was only possible because of the extensive economic and social power he acquired in Zlín during and after the First World War. Before the war, Bata had focused almost exclusively on the production of lightweight textile shoes, many for export. As demand slowed in the summer of 1914, Bata also successfully fought to break the monopoly two firms held over military boot production, and a few months later a consortium of Zlín shoemakers, dominated by Bata, received its first order for leather military boots. While he resented state supervision during the war, the conflict transformed the medium-sized business to dizzying heights. By 1915 his workforce had almost quintupled, and two years later, with continued improvements in high-speed mass production and mechanisation, up to 5,000 employees were producing 10,000 pairs of boots a day. By 1917, Bata was the largest footwear manufacturer in the Czechoslovakian region. However, as military contracts ended, production dropped to just 1,600 pairs a day in 1919, and he was employing less than a fifth of those in 1917. Compounded by a lack of raw materials, strikes

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[101] *Economist* (8 December 1928); Devinat, 'Bata System', 66; Olivova, *Doomed Democracy*, 132.
[102] Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 139-41; Olivova, *Doomed Democracy*, 152; Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 50.
[103] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 120-32, 143-44. The victory was later hailed in the British right-wing press: *Daily Mail* (1 August 1932).

and heavy debts, the government's monetary restructuring caused rapid inflation in 1922, making Bata products internationally uncompetitive. In response to the crisis, in September 1922 Tomas slashed his shoe prices in half and cut wages by 40%, along with rents and food prices in Zlín. A simultaneous advertising blitz meant Bata factories soon returned to full capacity.[104]

Thereafter, Bata experienced continuous and rapid expansion. Between 1923 and 1927 the company grew tenfold, and by 1928 was producing roughly 75,000 pairs a day and had 450 retail shops in Czechoslovakia alone. Bata factories in Zlín numbered just four in 1922, but a decade later there were 50 of them, plus another 20 in nearby Otrokovice. By 1930, Bata was one of the three largest firms in Czechoslovakia and the largest footwear company in Europe.[105] By 1930 Bata manufactured over half of all shoes in Czechoslovakia, and two years later effectively assumed a monopoly over the industry. However, it was not only the domestic market the company now dominated; more than 13.5 million pairs produced in 1931 were exported (38.6% overall production). That year the company also became debt-free and registered as a limited liability company with £1m in shares, all retained by the Bata family.[106] This growth was reflected in the number of 'Batamen' and 'Batawomen' employed; from a postwar nadir of 1,802 in 1923, by 1931 Bata had over 23,000 on the payroll, including 19,722 in Zlín.[107] By the early 1930s Bata shoes were produced or sold in most European countries, as well as Egypt, South Africa, Indonesia and India. Bata began selling in Britain in 1924, and by 1930 (two years before tariffs were raised) was exporting over £8.5m of goods.[108]

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[104] Devinat, 'Bata System', 49; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary,* 69, 89, 116-23, 137-41, 161-62; Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 42-44.
[105] Devinat, 'Bata System', 51; Meller, *European Cities*, 133; Pavitt, 'Bata Project', 39.
[106] *Manchester Guardian* (13 July 1932); Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 170, 246-47, 332-34.
[107] Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 42.
[108] Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 145, 248; Rumsey, *Bata Factory*; Smith, 'Bata Estate', 55.

There are multiple reasons for Bata's phenomenal success after 1923, not least the company's welfare capitalism.[109] Before the company's plans for a workers' paradise in Essex were even considered, it had also embraced this philosophy. Fearing instability from mass unemployment, slums, poverty and political opposition, Tomas aimed to build a city where 'the interests of employees meet with the interests of the employer.' Factory conditions characterised by regimentation, discipline, surveillance and strict hierarchies were offset by welfare.[110] During the First World War, Bata opened its own company cafeterias and grocery stores, partly supplied by farms it bought near Zlín; these schemes expanded so that by the late 1920s Bata owned a three-storey grocery warehouse and the company's canteens served up to 6,000 meals per hour. The firm also sold cheap clothing, bicycles and everyday goods, claiming a financial monopoly over the city.[111] The influx of labour, which propelled Zlín's population to over 31,000 by 1934, meant housing was a pressing concern, and as mayor Tomas built cheap, functional, modern company housing for his swelling workforce. In 1924 a master plan for the city was devised that adopted garden city principles and the company formed its own construction department to build this grand project: a modern city ten times its original size with electricity, running water and a modern sewage system.[112]

The houses, like the city itself, were built to maximise comfort and hygiene at an affordable price. As will be discussed further in chapter three, the 1,500 detached and semi-detached houses built and owned by Bata were designed to higher standards than existing homes. Each family unit had at least a kitchen, two bedrooms and an indoor bathroom. Bata also built

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[109] Many of these reasons, including 'workshop autonomy', the enmeshment of its workforce and technological utopianism will be discussed in later chapters.
[110] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 25-27.
[111] Devinat, 'Bata System', 181-82; Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 25-27; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 122-30.
[112] Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 204; Tomas Kasper and Dana Kasperova, 'The Bata Company in Zlín: a Shoe Company or a School Company?' *History of Education* 47:3 (2018), 333; Meller, *European Cities*, 137-42; Smith, 'Bata Estate', 58; Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 50.

hostels for juvenile workers and multi-storey hotels for unmarried employees: by 1940, Bata owned half the housing in the city. While company towns and welfare capitalism were not unheard of in Czechoslovakia before the interwar period, such a scale was novel. Zlín was modelled on Endicott Johnson's company towns built in the Susquehanna Valley in upstate New York, which was probably the largest footwear company in the world when Tomas visited in 1919.[113] By the time East Tilbury was built, as a facsimile of Zlín, Bata had inscribed industrial welfarism into Zlín's urban landscape. Not only Bata dwellings, hotels, shops and restaurants, but using his political power Tomas constructed schools, a hospital (1926), a department store (1927), sports facilities, dance halls, a 'House of Social Care' (1925), an open-air pool, gyms, libraries and lecture halls. A cinema was opened in September 1932 with a capacity of over 3,000 (Image 3.2) and was said to be the biggest in Europe. His utopian project to build a 'garden town' was funded by the company and repaid via public loans, rents and taxes. Bata built roads, public schools, power stations, water supplies, sewers, playgrounds and parks. In a few short years, Bata hegemony over the town and its people was absolute.[114]

Zlín appeared the reification of Tomas's ambition to construct a new world; one of prosperity and harmony built on industrial paternalism, welfare capitalism and unwavering loyalty to the company. On social security and healthcare, Czechoslovakia was more progressive than most neighbouring countries, but the role of private insurance was still considerable. Bata was convinced any system of welfare should place onus on individual self-help, not the collective, and should be implemented through private enterprise.[115] In Zlín, Bata also sought cross-class

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[113] Theresa Adamski, 'Bata's Zlín: Space for the Individual Collective?', 221-26 and Dolezalova, 'Bata's Search for Social Reconciliation' in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 91-98; Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 50.
[114] Devinat, 'Bata System', 50, 181-82; *The Scotsman* (14 September 1932); Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 206; Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 142; Meller, *European Cities*, 136-143.
[115] Dolezalova, 'Bata's Search for Social Reconciliation', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 90-100; Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 60-64.

unity partly through welfare. The company provided contributory healthcare insurance for workers and their families, which included access to spas and the company's modern hospital. Workers were hired subject to a medical examination (sometimes hiring was conditional on dental improvement) and routinely checked for new maladies. A system of relief funds was introduced in 1928 whereby fines (supplemented by the company) were used to help families suffering from illness, death and other hardships.[116] Significant financial incentives complimented these welfare schemes. By 1924, every worker received at least a portion of their wage through piece work or financial incentive schemes, which meant employees were encouraged to think of themselves as capitalists (discussed in chapter four). A 'birth bounty' of 1000 koruna (roughly £6) at 10% annual interest was introduced in 1926 for the children of employees: provided parents were in continuous employment at Bata, the child was paid at the age of 24.[117] The bounty, like other welfare measures, was designed to financially enmesh workers (and their children) into the firm's corporate infrastructure.[118]

[116] *Economist* (8 December 1928); Devinat, 'Bata System', 50, 176-84; Dolezalova, 'Bata's Search for Social Reconciliation', 84, and Marek and Strobach, 'Discipline and Order', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 55.
[117] Devinat, 'Bata System', 180; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 174-77; Kasper and Kasperova, 'Bata Company in Zlín', 332.
[118] Discussed in chapter four.

Image 3.2: The 'Square of Work' in Zlín stood opposite the factories; the image depicts Bata's cinema, shopping centre and hotels (1937-1938, Source: TBU Archive, Bata University in Zlín)

There was also a thriving social scene. A five-day, 45-hour working week was introduced before 1930 (although it was often alleged Bata routinely broke Czechoslovakia's eight-hour day legislation), which was reduced to 40 hours in 1934. By the late-1920s a week's paid holiday was introduced, which was adopted at East Tilbury, too. Much like the CMC's welfare department, Bata's personnel and social departments commanded overwhelming control – overseeing housing, schools, education, shops, pharmacies, hospitals, hotels, cafeterias and social security – and directed nearly every cultural activity. By the late 1920s, Bata's head of personnel was the city's police commissioner and the company's chief doctor was the chair of Zlín's health department. As public and private power became indivisible, the aims of the departments (to 'maintain good relations between the company and its employees […] build a

more stable and more appropriate industrial order') were made significantly easier: attempts to form independent cultural activities were interpreted as an act of rebellion and only possible for the city's wealthiest inhabitants.[119] Recreation played an important function in regulating social and corporate life. Sport was believed to improve loyalty, team spirit and corporate consciousness, and Bata provided football pitches, athletic tracks, tennis courts, dance halls and volleyball courts.[120] Public speeches and parades, a common feature of life in Zlín, were accompanied with declarations of loyalty to the company. This was epitomised in Labour Day celebrations, which Bata appropriated to deplete the strength of organised labour in the city. Beginning in 1924, by the late 1920s Zlín welcomed up to 20,000 people to its 'Square of Work' (Image 3.2) for dances, sports competitions, picnics and speeches from Tomas praising 'solidarity and mutual dependence.' Working-class solidarity was replaced by a celebration of the 'working family.'[121] By the mid-1930s, the company had also built galleries and a shoe museum.[122] The city's cultural landscape was effectively a private monopoly, replacing previously plural, democratic institutions.

Education in Zlín, too, was incorporated into Bata's corporate machinery. From the early 1920s the firm offered its workers training in languages, machinery and work procedures. This quickly expanded into an extensive, formalised system of education after Tomas opened the Bata School for Young Men in September 1925. Designed to create model industrial workers with an entrepreneurial mindset, the school provided three-year apprenticeships to poor rural boys, who lived in hostels and followed military-like regimes. Modelled on English boarding schools,

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[119] Devinat, 'Bata System', 168-80; Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 49, 60. Quoted from Kasper and Kasperova, 'Bata Company in Zlín', 335.
[120] *Economist* (8 December 1928).
[121] *Bata Record* (1 June 1934); Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 297-304.
[122] Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 60.

with an emphasis on discipline, sport and self-control, apprentices worked full-time in the factories and spent their evenings and weekends studying science, maths, technology and design. They were taught primarily to create economic value for the company. A few years later the concept was extended to girls, who were taught cookery, housewifery and personal care.[123] Starting with 150 apprentices in 1925, by 1930 Bata had 2,000 enrolled worldwide, including 1,600 in Zlín.[124] For employees not enrolled on the apprenticeship programme, for a nominal fee they could participate in a diverse range of evening classes including shoe design, languages, management, philosophy and psychology. In 1931, Bata opened its first business school, and between 1925 and 1940 the company ran 1,262 courses or lectures for nearly 40,000 employees.[125] Meanwhile the company magazine – effectively the weekly Zlín newspaper – was used to project Tomas Bata's philosophy and politics.[126] These provisions were openly interpreted as a countermeasure to reduced working hours, and an attempt to ensure leisure time would be used productively in the interests of the company.[127]

Bata also attempted to take control of public schooling. Although Czech state schools were democratically run and had high standards, Bata believed that they failed to foster entrepreneurialism or technical expertise. As mayor he pioneered educational reform, creating a network of schools to cultivate his future workforce. In 1929 he introduced 'Sophisticated Experimental Citizens' Schools' to cultivate his idealised 'new man', but teachers valiantly resisted these changes and by the early 1930s the experiment was abandoned.[128] In Zlín,

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[123] Dolezalova, 'Bata's Search for Social Reconciliation', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns,* 84; Kasper and Kasperova, 'Bata Company in Zlín'; 336-39.
[124] Devinat, 'Bata System', 165; *Bata Record* (27 July 1934).
[125] Dolezalova, 'Bata's Search for Social Reconciliation', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 84-85; Kasper and Kasperova, 'Bata Company in Zlín', 336-44; Meller, *European Cities*, 138-39.
[126] Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 138, 369.
[127] Tomas Bata speech reproduced in *Derry Journal* (12 November 1930).
[128] Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 272; Cecil Parrot, 'Introduction', in Olivova, *Doomed Democracy*, 9; Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 60.

therefore, we see a blurring of state welfare and welfare capitalism, as the functions of local and national government – house building, education, social security, public health, urban planning, libraries and transport – became part of Bata's corporate state. Meanwhile, institutions which brought plurality, choice and democratic freedom to cities – sports clubs, cultural centres, shops, festivals and popular entertainment – became conduits for propelling Bata's worldview. He sought to raise the moral standards of the city, impose patriarchal discipline and, most importantly, foster an environment where unfettered capitalism could realise its true potential. His welfarism, like Crittall's, was the foundation of a utopianism which would soon embed itself in Britain.

'The Worker as a Partner in Industry'

The widespread adoption of welfare policies undoubtedly helped British capitalism traverse the political challenges it faced after 1918. After the industrialised slaughter of the First World War and the injustice of widespread unemployment, overcrowding and insecurity, social conditions were unquestionably cushioned by such measures. Nonetheless, welfare capitalism offered employers tangible benefits. In placating industrial unrest, regulating larger workforces, appeasing workers' loss of autonomy, undermining rising class consciousness, pre-empting intrusive legislation, and improving morale, productivity and loyalty, there was a sincere belief welfarism was a utopian remedy. Its real attraction was its continuity with the past: it was but a schematised and more sophisticated doppelganger of pre-war practices. Given the recalcitrance of employers' organisations to government interference, we must look to individual companies to see this renewed social contract in action. Their explicit support for welfare capitalism can be summarised by Sir Roland Nugent, a director of the FBI, when he privately urged businesses to treat employees as 'a partner in the industry in which he is

engaged.'[129] Liberal capitalism, at least in Britain, emerged from its life-threatening crisis having absorbed its critiques and partially responding to them, by ensuring a remodelled, reformed status quo. This change, therefore, was not only a continuation but a strengthening of a political economy in constant revolution.

Welfare capitalism, however, should not be confused with philanthropy or freedom from economic exploitation. Nor should it be placed within a strict paradigm of expediency versus self-interest. As many of the largest employers in Britain adopted it after the war, employee wellbeing became an integral and technocratic part of business organisation.[130] Indeed, the CMC has often been described as 'philanthropic', much in the same vein as nineteenth-century company villages, but such a term was emphatically rejected by Francis Crittall.[131] For both Francis and Tomas Bata the word was devoid of meaning in their worldview, as individual generosity failed to offer a reproducible, sustainable model of society. They believed it was up to employers to solve social ills, as it was only wealthy industrialists who held (and should hold) this power, but Crittall also castigated bosses who thought of employees as 'raw materials' or 'machines': 'inhumane detachment' was possible, but the estrangement it created was a potential tinderbox. Crittall maintained the nature of 'modern' capitalism meant 'philanthropy did not exist', and there was no distinction between 'good and bad employers', but there was between the 'wise' pursuing welfarism and the 'foolish' which did not. Much like William Margrie, William Lever and Herbert Spencer, Crittall envisioned a world in which charity was obsolete and philanthropy was unnecessary because a 'properly ordered social system' made

[129] FBI, Reconstruction after the war (1917, MSS.200/F/4/32/2), EAC, Minutes (February 1917-March 1918, MRC MSS.200/F/1/1/).
[130] Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare*, 3, 118.
[131] King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 19-20; Thurgood, 'Silver End Garden Village', 36.

them redundant.[132] Bata, too, thought of himself as realising higher forms of capitalist organisation. He repeated often and publicly that 'charity does not help people', and publishing pamphlets entitled 'Not Charity, but Work', and these beliefs were repeated in British Bata's weekly magazine, *Bata Record*.[133]

The core of this thought lay in the assumption welfare capitalism was both fairer and self-sustaining. Bata thought he could 'tame capitalism and make it serve' workers rather than 'enslave' them, while Crittall claimed it was 'folly' to think 'an employer's duty begins and ends at the factory gates.'[134] The basis of these welfare measures, much like the National Insurance Act of 1911, was to encourage self-support: the poor would pay for their own insurance. 'Unearned benefits' as Crittall put it, could bring 'no real good' and company welfare schemes had to be self-financing: both capital and labour needed a 'square deal.'[135] Bata was more forthright, stating that 'people who become dependent on handouts do not depend on themselves.'[136] Likewise, more leisure time and educational funding was thought to improve productivity and loyalty, while employees gained the opportunity to rise within the company hierarchy.[137]

Taken in its entirety, industrial welfare was thought to be sound business. Bata told his workforce in 1924 the reason for 'profit-sharing' (incentive schemes) was not charity but to raise production, giving workers an interest in speedier, higher quality and greater output. A decade later these words were repeated in the *Bata Record*, which praised welfare for improving *esprit de corps* and loyalty, and creating a 'binding strand' between company profits

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[132] *Crittall Magazine* (July 1925); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 117-20, 152-58.
[133] Devinat, 'Bata System', 177; *Bata Record* (8 June 1934); Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 71-72, 102.
[134] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 118; Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 47-48.
[135] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 154-57.
[136] *Bata Record* (8 June 1934); Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 47-48.
[137] *Crittall Magazine* (October 1927); *Bata Record* (8 June 1934).

and individual wages.[138] In Zlín, treating residents for tuberculosis and other illnesses clearly made business sense, while selling products cheaply in Bata shops was believed to boost purchasing power by 10-25%: employee living standards were raised, and Bata profits were diversified and extended.[139] At the CMC, there were immediate benefits to events like the annual sports show, which attracted over 6,500 competitors in 1925 and earned the company £20 profit through gate money alone. The five-day week was also thought to have improved productivity and reduced waste. Meanwhile, engaging directly with unions was believed to have prevented strikes, ensuring continuous production and a reputation for reliability.[140] The intangible benefits were stressed too. Crittall emphasised the significant 'hidden profits' created by employees with better physical health, comfortable working environments and reduced sickness rates. High wages were thought to attract the best labour, with Francis asserting in 1934 that 'a firm that can only be saved by starvation wages is not worth saving.' The company, meanwhile, urged its workers to visit their dentist because 'millions of working weeks are lost each year through illnesses due to defective teeth.'[141] Later, at Silver End, employees and residents were strongly encouraged to invest in the building of the village to foster mutual financial interests and a sense that wage earners were 'minor capitalists'.[142]

Nonetheless, the major incentive for employers to embrace welfarism was its apparent dissolution of class tensions and divisions. Francis Crittall used welfare, likely with genuine feeling towards his workforce, as a means of softening class interests and projecting a sense that management and manual workers were not incompatible. In his idealised worldview,

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[138] *Bata Record* (8 June, 6 July 1934).
[139] Devinat, 'Bata System', 181-84.
[140] *Crittall Magazine* (September 1925); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 118, 135-37, 167-68.
[141] *Crittall Magazine* (October 1925); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 119, 133-35, 152-54.
[142] Discussed in chapter four.

'mutual understanding and trust would replace class suspicion' and 'suicidal antagonism' propagated by anti-capitalist forces would end, lest it herald 'an economic Armageddon.'[143] Bata, meanwhile, placed welfare at the heart of social reconciliation after the war, with a mutually dependent relationship established between the company and the individual (and their families) in all aspects of wellbeing. Financial incentive schemes were meant to ensure the interests all employees were united: damage to the firm meant damage to one's own interests. Again, these ideals were later circulated in the *Bata Record*, as British Bata extolled 'faithful collaboration' at the works.[144] Thus the basis of some critiques of capitalism, that there was an inherent class antagonism at its heart, was comprehensively dismissed.

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Welfarism, therefore, was hailed as a silver bullet to postwar troubles, easing the minds of workers, productively shaping leisure time, uniting class interests and improving output, all with minimal financial costs. Welfare came in many forms, both inside and outside the factory, but the overriding aim of what Bata called the 'New Society', and Crittall hailed as 'conditions as nearly perfect as possible', was a new deal for the working class.[145] It was a reimagining of class relations as advanced by leading employers' organisations which perpetuated liberalism without resulting to philanthropy or sacrificing profits. By looking to individual companies, it is possible to see how welfare capitalism was understood and implemented. It was not limited to the isolated benevolence of a few religiously motivated firms but was a widely adopted and conscious effort to reshape Britain, and other advanced industrial nations, while fundamentally maintaining the status quo. Nevertheless, Bata and Crittall recognised that to truly reimagine

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[143] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 149.
[144] *Bata Record* (June 1934); Dolezalova, 'Bata's Search for Social Reconciliation', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 83-84.
[145] *Crittall Magazine* (November 1927).

capitalist society would require a physical embodiment of their welfarism and utopianism – one that would soon be carved into England's urban landscape.

Chapter Three – Technological Utopianism in the Machine Age

On 23 October 1934, as the first houses on Bata Avenue in East Tilbury were being built, about 20 miles away William Beveridge rose to address the Cosmopolitan Club at the London School of Economics. The topic of his talk was his vision of a 'modern utopia', and while it is unlikely the economist, social reformer and future architect of the welfare state knew anything of the self-declared industrial arcadia on the windswept marshland on the northern banks of the Thames, the two visions were remarkably similar. Beveridge's utopia, he told the audience, was a liberal capitalist state that championed modernity in the machine age. 'Econ.', he called it, was a nation where birth control was widely used, machines liberated humanity from 'dull' work and 'drudgery', and more time was devoted to leisure and education. Private enterprise and modern factories produced the latest goods, such as motor cars and wireless sets, which were affordable for all. Through efficient state management and genuine 'competitive capitalism', unemployment and hunger had finally been overcome and consumer choice was plentiful. Absolute equality of opportunity was enshrined in the education system so that meritocratic social mobility was championed in Beveridge's gospel of efficiency. Cities were now 'emptier and greener' as 'high-speed' trains ferried suburbanites, who lived in large spacious houses.[1] A secular landscape, which reflected his own 'materialist agnosticism', Beveridge's faith in the capacity of technology and technocracy to liberate humanity was not born in isolation, and while many liberals may have recoiled at the thought of more centralised state administration, in his mind this 'rationalised' rule was not designed to challenge capitalism but strengthen free market economies.[2]

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[1] *Bata Record* (August-October 1934); Beveridge, 'My Utopia', in Beveridge, *Planning Under Socialism*, 130-142.
[2] Jose Harris, *William Beveridge: A Biography* (Clarendon, 1997), 322-23; 'William Henry Beveridge', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2011, www.oxforddnb.com).

The timing of the talk was not insignificant. As liberal capitalist nations continued to battle the dramatic fall in international trade that had followed the Wall Street Crash five years earlier, Soviet Russia's remarkable economic development – now progressing with its Second Five-Year Plan – was the red elephant in the room. Meanwhile, the death of President Hindenburg two months earlier unshackled Germany's Führer to pursue his own eutopian ambitions. Drawing on these developments, Beveridge described his utopia as a contemporary, worldwide system of competing political economies where war was eliminated, and individuals were free to relocate to any country they wished. Nations would compete to attract citizens, in a system that effectively marketised political economies. Nonetheless, in all nations 'parliamentary democracy and dictatorships are out of fashion' and governance was handed to 'a profession of administrators': an elected set of elite technocrats entrusted to 'maximise economic health.'[3] For a social scientist devoted to the alleviation of social problems through 'objective' policymaking, Beveridge's utopia was predictable, but nevertheless echoed capitalist utopians who had also embraced a centralised system of meritocratic rule.[4] Yet despite his probable ignorance, in Beveridge's vision we see not an early framework of the welfare state but an interwar technological utopianism that was embodied at East Tilbury and Silver End. In these villages, as in Beveridge's utopia, a belief existed that maximum efficiency would create a land of universal opulence; that mass production would lead to mass consumption and improved profits; that mechanisation would liberate the body from toil and generate higher standards of living; and the rationalisation of society through the adoption of scientific management promised optimal productive efficiency.

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[3] Beveridge, 'My Utopia', in Beveridge, *Planning Under Socialism*.
[4] Harris, 'William Beveridge.'

Britain's relationship with technology and 'modernity' between the wars was, however, one of contestation, contradictions and competing ideologies.[5] As Christopher Lawrence and Anna-K. Mayer have argued, after the horrors of the First World War, many derided faith in science and technology, opposing the cult of efficiency, specialisation and professionalisation in favour of rediscovering an 'older (and more authentic) English way of doing things, on a defiantly anti-modernist' sentiment.[6] This ambiguity was most clearly present in J.B. Priestley's *English Journey*, published in the same year as Beveridge's address. Priestley maintained a 'third England' had emerged after the First World War, estranged from the rural pastoralism and the grim industrial capitalism that had previously characterised the nation. This England, supposedly born in America, was the face of modern capitalism: it was 'the England of arterial and by-pass roads, of filling stations and factories that look like exhibition buildings, of giant cinemas and dance-halls.' Mass production, he reasoned, had created a culture of cheap imitation and 'depressing monotony' as the English abandoned individuality for standardised consumer identities, but it nevertheless had a liberating impact on those 'toiling in the muck.' The machine age had raised living standards and generated more leisure time. Britons had less dignity, but more comfort; less want, but greater alienation; more possessions, but less piety: an England epitomised by the characterless 'modern factory, all glass and white tiles and chromium plate.'[7] This was, of course, the nation that had produced that great anti-utopian, anti-technology novel just two years earlier, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), but

[5] Modernity is defined as a 'condition of experience' that is materially 'broken with the past' and primarily driven by the 'explosion of scientific knowledge and the development of new technologies, enabling new modes of production and consumption': see Deborah Suggs Ryan, *Ideal Homes, 1918-39* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2018), 58-59.

[6] Christopher Lawrence and Anna-K. Mayer, 'Regenerating England: An Introduction', in Lawrence and Mayer (eds.), *Regenerating England: Science, Medicine and Culture in Interwar Britain* (Amsterdam: Clio Medica, 2000), 1-4.

[7] J.B. Priestley, *English Journey* (William Heinemann, 1934), 129-33, 398-406.

simultaneously H.G. Wells' *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), which foresaw a secular utopian future built on scientific learning and eugenics.[8]

The polarities of modernity and technology were intimately tied to the development of capitalism. The Amalgamated Engineering Union, which represented most Crittall workers, likewise debated the merits of this technological utopianism in its *Monthly Journal*. On the one hand, mechanisation *could* bring higher wages, greater consumption, fewer working hours and an end to arduous physical exertion. On the other hand, it also heralded a dystopian future of alienation, undignified and monotonous work, the loss of skilled craftsmanship, 'technological unemployment', deindividualisation and dehumanisation. Unless socialised and harnessed, the worker would eventually 'resemble an ox in his mental make-up', as Frederick Taylor had described the ideal worker in 1913.[9] For many in England there was a yearning to return to an imagined medieval pastoralism, epitomised by the popularity of the suburban Tudorbethan semi.[10] For capitalists, however, 'modernity' provided bountiful opportunity. In an increasingly professionalised, corporate society, individuals such as Oliver Sheldon, works manager at Rowntree's, wrote optimistically in 1923 that technocracy and the mechanical revolution would generate undreamt-of levels of wealth.[11] Like Sheldon, Jan Bata predicted mechanisation would 'produce a wealth which men had never imagined possible even in their wildest dreams.'[12] As the editor of *The Crittall Magazine* put it in 1925, 'we dream and scheme

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[8] Huxley, *Brave New World* (Chatto and Windus, 1932); H.G. Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come* (Hutchinson, 1933). This diversity of opinion on 'modernity' can clearly be seen in Clough Williams-Ellis (ed.), *Britain and the Beast* (Readers' Union, 1937).

[9] Amalgamated Engineering Union, *Monthly Journal* (January-February 1927, August 1937, Modern Records Centre (MRC), University of Warwick, MSS.259/AEU/4/6/); quoted in Vicky Long, *The Rise and Fall of the Healthy Factory* (Palgrave, 2011), 139. Of course, advances in science and machinery have inspired hosts of dystopian and anti-utopian literature; see Claeys, *Dystopia*, 75-79, 295-332, 365-69.

[10] Lawrence and Mayer, 'Regenerating England', 9-12; Suggs Ryan, *Ideal Homes*, 137-40.

[11] Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare*, 12; Long, *Healthy Factory*, 51-57.

[12] *Bata Record* (25 May, 6 July 1934).

about the utopian perfections of an Enchanted Golden Age, but it is the Steel Age, with its many marvels, that seems to be now at our door.'[13]

As Howard Segal has demonstrated, technological and technocratic social dreaming has existed in America and Europe from at least the 1830s, operating as a form of conservative utopianism that extended the existing political economy without fundamentally challenging it. By the early 1930s, in the USA, this had developed into a 'self-conscious movement and ideology' that held a brief but 'spectacular reign' over the American imagination.[14] Echoing much of what William Margrie and others had advocated in Britain, American technological utopians presented a surprisingly cohesive philosophy that claimed the application of new scientific knowledge could free humanity from physical toil, material want and unfulfilled potential. The plagues of unemployment, waste, hunger and insecurity would be engineered into obsolescence. The movement took inspiration from scientific management, town planning and corporate rationalisation in search of a more efficient society. In these assiduously planned and integrated economies, the tensions between modernity and tradition would melt away in a 'healthy order' best demonstrated by garden cities built by capitalists.[15] Technological utopians were almost always integrated and successful members of society: white, socially mobile and well-educated middle-class men who were sympathetic to big business. In these worlds of material plenty, religion was reduced to a tool for upholding and motivating the cult of efficiency, as technology and science took on a spiritual quality.[16]

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[13] *Crittall Magazine* (August 1925).
[14] Howard Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 3, 122. Scholars have extensively linked the 'origins' of capitalism with religious thought (particularly Protestantism) but this thesis concerns the perpetuation of capitalism through a secular ideology. See R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (Pelican, 1964); Weber, *Protestant Ethic*.
[15] Segal, *Technological Utopianism*, 24-27, 91-55, 104-27.
[16] *Ibid*, 29-37, 46-55, 91, 121.

Many capitalists in interwar Britain shared this utopian vision, which failed to challenge the direction of society but simply its speed and extent. Of course, technological and technocratic utopianism was not limited to the political right, but unlike capitalists most on the left did not wield the political or economic power to act on their social dreaming.[17] As Kit Kowol detailed in his study of the Fordson Estate, a 'conservative modernity' existed that attempted to apply scientific breakthroughs and mechanisation in rural settings, while maintaining 'traditional patterns of life.' Henry Ford believed in combining agricultural and industrial production, and many Conservatives shared his faith that 'machines in the garden' provided a utopian remedy to a host of social ills.[18] Alternatively, management consultants like Lyndall Urwick placed their faith in a more centralised and technocratic 'scientific management' of the economy, believing it would end economic fluctuations. Meanwhile Charles Bedaux, the highly influential management consultant whose neo-Taylorite innovations transformed large parts of British industry in the 1930s, declared that scientific management could eradicate poverty and form a revolution from the right, pioneered by technocrats and engineers. By the early 1940s he was advancing the idea of 'Equivalism', a unit of mental effort that would replace money with a more meritocratic system.[19] As with most British intellectuals, the moderate right did not resist technological progress but merely fought the left on what 'modernity' should look like.[20] The planned communities of East Tilbury and Silver End not only embraced technological utopianism in production, distribution and architecture, but also technocracy in the creation of authoritarian planned economies. From their production of industrial goods and daily necessities to their monopolies on employment, accommodation, recreation and culture, or

[17] *Ibid*, 21, 64.
[18] Kowol, 'Conservative Modernity', 781-87.
[19] Littler, *Labour Process*, 99-107.
[20] Edgerton, *Rise and Fall*, 153-53, 174-75.

the vertically integrated company structure, the Crittall Manufacturing Company (CMC) and British Bata established undemocratic, profit-seeking universes that were meticulously planned, systematised and enforced. The invisible hand of market forces was supplanted by the 'visible hand' of bureaucratic corporate governance.

Nowhere did these debates over modernity, liberal capitalism and consumption play out more than in housing. This was the most visible 'utopian' aspect of these two villages, but housing also formed a fundamental 'insurance against Bolshevism and revolution', as the Lloyd George Ministry put it.[21] It would be easy to assume, given the unparalleled popularity of vernacular architecture after the war, that Priestley's nostalgia for the imagined pre-industrial past was widely shared. Capitalists like Bata and Crittall were aware of how urban forms mirrored and shaped social idealism: as Winston Churchill put it, 'we shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us.'[22] However, as Deborah Suggs Ryan has argued, while aesthetically the English may have preferred architecture that was 'reassuringly traditional' – in homes, pubs and other public sites – a popular modernity lurked underneath these façades.[23] By the early 1930s, housing was at its most affordable and attainable as the rapid growth of suburbs established the idea, and ideal, that Britain was a nation of homeowners.[24] Despite this surge in housebuilding, modernistic houses represented 'an insignificant drop in the sea of semis' that were overwhelmingly Tudorbethan or neo-Georgian.[25] Only around 100 architects built in a modern style between the wars.[26]

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[21] Michael Harlow, *The People's Homes? Social Rented Housing in Europe and America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 107.
[22] Quoted in Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 224.
[23] Suggs Ryan, *Ideal Homes*, 43-48.
[24] Harry Richardson and Derek Aldcroft, *Building in the British Economy Between the Wars* (Harlow: Allen and Unwin, 1968), 160-63.
[25] Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 97.
[26] Alan Powers, *Modern: The Modern Movement in Britain* (Merrell, 2005), 30.

The reasons behind the popularity of mock-timbered frontages, red-tiled hipped roofs, bay windows and rough-cast elevations are varied, but as Suggs Ryan points out they harkened to a bucolic nostalgia for a pre-industrial, expansionist age in British history. The aesthetic was deliberately patriotic, anti-European, and played on the idea of national cultural supremacy. Nonetheless, these houses were largely a sham. Housebuilders utilised the latest materials, techniques and spatial designs, and while they may have appealed to notions of 'Old England' the sprawling interwar suburbs were also marketed as sites of modernity where utilities such as piped water, indoor bathrooms, electricity, gas and 'labour-saving' designs promised to unburden the 'professional housewife.'[27] Suburbanites, especially women, enthusiastically adopted this fashionable form of tempered modernity: 'gadgets' and 'efficient' kitchens (inspired by Taylorism) heralded their physical liberation.[28] If the English appeared to have rejected modernity and modernism, in fact they embraced it in a masked and diluted form, and in doing so also adopted key aspects of this technological utopian discourse closely associated with the political right.[29] As shall be argued, modern architecture came to be popularly associated with capitalism between the wars, a fact that may seem surprising given its later association with New Towns from the mid-1960s onwards.[30]

For many, the answer to Britain's post-war housing crisis and political turmoil was the creation of self-contained 'model industrial villages.'[31] This collided with an older tradition, predating William Morris or Ebenezer Howard, of anti-capitalist and anti-urbanist sentiment seemingly epitomised before 1914 at Letchworth Garden City. After the war, town planners and

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[27] Suggs Ryan, *Ideal Homes*, 135-63. Often aided by mass production and bought on credit, see P. Scott, 'The Twilight World of Interwar British Hire Purchase', *Past and Present* 177 (2002), 195-225.
[28] Suggs Ryan, *Ideal Homes*, 32-33, 93-134.
[29] For more on interwar suburban modernity, see Michael John Law, *The Experience of Suburban Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2014).
[30] Ortolano, *Thatcher's Progress*, 111-16.
[31] *Journal of Industrial Welfare* (February, August 1920).

architects throughout Europe envisioned a return to rural life with the creation of small village-like communities, including in England with the likes of Welwyn Garden City (1920). But if villages were seen as ideal, ordered and 'natural', these were not the unplanned, pre-industrial settlements of independent earners and famers the English had imagined.[32] Unlike American conceptions of modernity between the wars, embodied in the steel-and-glass skyscrapers of the nation's bulging metropoles, in Britain 'technological awe went hand in hand with arcadian pastoralism', as Vicky Long has put it, and the country's embrace of modernity was one that could co-exist outside cities. The modern factory in a garden came to symbolise, therefore, the very essence of England's interwar technological utopianism.[33] This tempered form of modernity was epitomised in the 'garden cities' of East Tilbury and Silver End where an embrace of rural pastoralism clashed and coexisted with mechanised mass production and the modern aesthetic. Modernism embodied a faith that the scientific reimagining in society could liberate humanity and produce a world of universal opulence. On the one hand, therefore, the villages were undeniably a visible cauldron of bubbling contradictions. Urban yet rural; industrial yet domestic; mechanical yet natural; functional yet isolated: a fusion of anticapitalist longings for a return to an arcadian past with a twentieth century imagined utopian-capitalist future. On the other hand, they fit comfortably into Britain's interwar relationship with 'modernity.'[34]

Superficially, Silver End and East Tilbury were the quintessential expressions of England's interwar modernity. As the only working-class estates built in a modernistic style in Britain between the wars, these industrial wellsprings in England's rural heartland were the visual

[32] Lawrence and Mayer, 'Regenerating England', 14; Meller, *European Cities*, 117-45.
[33] Long, *Healthy Factory*, 49-57.
[34] Suggs Ryan, *Ideal Homes*, 60.

symbol of the nation's faith in technology and technocracy.[35] Unlike the historicised and vernacular architecture of Bournville and Port Sunlight, these utopias embraced the machine and the future. While keeping to garden city principles, they broke with the vernacular aesthetics of previous utopian company settlements that attempted to recapture a pre-industrial past, and where the likes of Saltaire, Bournville and Port Sunlight were motivated by the owners' Nonconformism, Silver End and East Tilbury's philosophical midwife was secular liberalism. Like Beveridge's 'modern utopia', the architecture of the two villages reflected the companies' belief capitalism could be perfected through embracing technology and technocracy, in a nation that associated modernist architecture as the incarnation of industrial capitalism. In their simple white walls and uncompromising horizontal lines, there existed an equally simple, unwavering faith in the relentless revolution of capitalism to liberate the masses and create a land of universal opulence.

'Embodying the Spirit of the Twentieth Century': The Machine Age Takes Hold

The CMC was probably the first business in Britain to embrace the concept of machine-age housing. Immediately after the war, it set about building the first estate that was visibly 'modernistic' (although the style had not yet been fully formulated and was modernistic 'more by accident than design', according to Gillian Darley), and in doing so hoped to demonstrate that scientific efficiency was the answer to Britain's housing crisis.[36] With an estimated 600,000 new dwellings needed in 1918, the government's highly influential report into post-war housing solutions and minimum standards, the Tudor Walter's report (1916-1918), had clung to garden-city principles in advocating low-density, high-quality 'cottage' housing for the

[35] Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 13-42.
[36] Darley, *Excellent Essex*, 87.

working class, but had also encouraged the use of new materials such as concrete and steel to overcome the nation's timber shortage. Thanks partly to lobbying by the CMC, the report recommended architects used a variety of standardised window and door sizes (but enough to avoid 'monotony') to reduce production costs.[37] To influence the Tudor Walter's committee and provide a prototype of cost-effective housing, in July 1918 the CMC completed work on two experimental 'show homes' on the outskirts of Braintree. Designed by Walter 'Pink' Crittall and architect Charles Quennell, the two semi-detached houses were billed as a solution to the national housing crisis. At a time when Walter estimated construction materials had risen by an average of 145% since 1912, wartime price controls on traditional construction materials were still in place, and the production of bricks had fallen by two thirds since 1914, these houses seemingly promised a holistic solution.[38]

As can be seen in Image 4.1, the houses shared many aesthetic features that would later be termed 'modernist', as well as the movement's guiding principles of practicality, utility and function. The two-storey, three-bedroom semis used balustraded flat-roofs, unrendered and unadorned concrete walls, reinforced concrete flooring and standard green Crittall windows. To demonstrate the superiority and efficiency of mass-produced industrial products, no wood was used at all. Steel staircases, cupboards, skirting boards, doors, shelves, picture rails and washing lines gave the houses a cold, abrasive feel that was not helped by limited internal plastering.[39] The show homes were followed by a 7.5-acre estate (the Cressing Road-Clockhouse Way estate) of 65 similar houses built to fulfil the Tudor Walters report's

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[37] Local Government Board, *Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider Questions of Building Construction in Connection With the Provision of Dwellings for the Working Classes* (HM Stationers, 1918), 35, 52; Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 2, 13-14.

[38] Walter Crittall, *An Example of Unit-building by the Crittall Manufacturing Company* (Chiswick Press, 1918); Richardson and Aldcroft, *Building Between the Wars*, 135-38.

[39] Crittall, *Unit-building*; Tony Crosby *et al.*, 'Workers' Houses in Essex', *Industrial Archaeology Review* 32:2 (2008), 111.

recommendations, which, forming a leafy suburb of Braintree, was labelled 'Concrete Town' by locals.[40] The houses, let to CMC workers, were deliberately experimental and unlike anything built previously in Britain. It is likely Walter Crittall was influenced by Tony Garnier's *Cite Industrielle*, a utopian image of a mechanised, electrically powered city of cubist concrete houses published in 1917, or even Italian Futurist Antonio Sant'Elia's *Citta Nuova* (1914), who also envisioned a metropolis of concrete, steel and glass. These visions, like Crittall's proto-modernistic estate, pre-dated Le Corbusier's 1923 seminal book *Towards a New Architecture* (published in English in 1927), which served as a manifesto for modernism and advocated mass-produced, flat-roofed concrete housing.[41] Walter wanted to overcome the 'prejudice' against flat roofs and allow function to dictate design, and while the houses lacked the pale exterior and open-plan 'ethereal' interior that would also come to characterise modernism, it was nonetheless the first proto-modernistic estate in Britain.[42]

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[40] CMC, Board Minutes (June 1925); *Crittall Magazine* (September 1925).
[41] Tony Garnier, *Une Cite Industrielle* (Paris, 1917); Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York: Dover, 1986); Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 17-24; Thurgood, 'Silver End Garden Village', 36.
[42] Crittall, *Unit-building*; Finn Jensen and Ellen Thorogood-Page, 'Britain's First Steps in Modernism: Cressing Road and the Clockhouse Way Estate 1919-1920', *Architectural Research Quarterly* 13 (2009), 273-83.

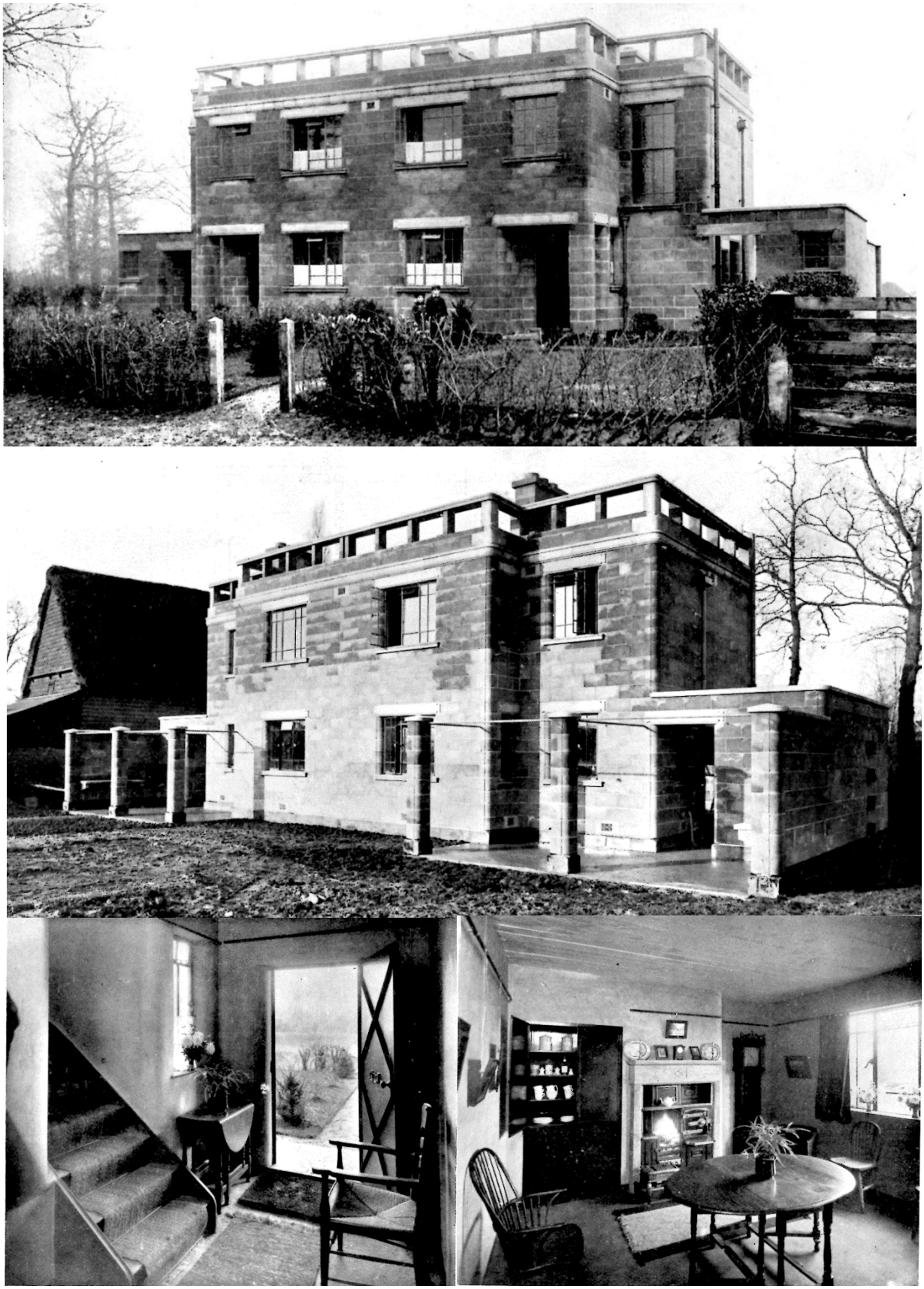

Image 4.1: The modernistic Cressing Road experimental show homes (1918) (reproduced from Walter Crittall, *Unit-building*)

Although Walter shared the aesthetic motivations of the modern movement, as well as a technocratic attention to utility and function, the real novelty of the estate was its construction. Using the mass production techniques learned in wartime, Walter devised a 'very mechanical' new construction method called the 'unit system', whereby houses were planned and built using grid-like half-metre concrete blocks, which formed one-metre 'units' (preferring the more precise metric system to yards). A 'Winget' machine made the units nearby, producing 100 per hour, and transported them using a light railway. The aim was to standardise the design of all cottages, injecting their construction with a formalised division of labour and thereby significantly reducing costs from wasted material, time and labour. Walter and Quennell claimed the houses could be built quickly and at 25-30% less than an equivalent sized home, but at a superior standard. Flat roofs were said to have simplified construction and saved at least £28 in material alone.[43] Walter's belief that scientific, efficient and rational architecture could emancipate the working class was explicitly tied to private production, as the CMC subsidiary, the Unit Construction Company, was later used to build CMC factories in Maldon and Witham. Walter was so impressed with the scheme, which was not embraced by the architectural community, that he named his second daughter Unity.[44]

Although the CMC was typically self-congratulatory about the estate, the houses were not a success. Francis Crittall used the estate to highlight the superiority and necessity of private enterprise in national housing, claiming to have helped alleviate the slum-like conditions in Braintree where the local council had failed.[45] Despite this, they were privately aware the

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[43] Crittall, *Unit-building*; *The Builder* (10 October 1919); Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 17-24. Although the houses theoretically cost below £500, they cost between £678-718. Their construction can be seen at British Pathé, 'Building Of Homes For Heroes' (1919, https://www.britishpathe.com/video/building-of-homes-for-heroes/query/world+war+1).

[44] Crosby, 'Silver End Model Village', 72; Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 18.

[45] Ken Cuthbe records (Essex Record Office (ERO), Chelmsford, A8184); *Braintree and Witham Times* (3 October 1930).

dwellings were little improvement on the town's existing stock. An appraisal of the estate in July 1925, just a few years after its completion, suggested the homes were barely habitable and in need of immediate repair, valuing them at around half of construction costs. The report concluded the houses were cold, ugly and depressing, and were let at inflated rents. The use of concrete was particularly troublesome, as it was prone to cracking and shrinkage, meaning water damage and damp were a persistent problem, and it provided poor insulation. Residents also disliked the abundant use of steel.[46] The Cressing Road-Clockhouse Way estate was by no means the only housing scheme to use concrete or scientific management, as the government and private builders experimented new materials, methods and styles to overcome supply shortages.[47] Nevertheless, the material was disliked from an aesthetic standpoint by the likes of Raymond Unwin, the influential architect, town planner and member of the Tudor Walter committee, and the same went for flat-roofed houses. This criticism was reflected in press coverage of the CMC estate, and concrete's near-universal dislike contributed to its rejection in the Tudor Walter's report.[48] While concrete was abandoned at Silver End, technological utopianism would continue to guide the company.

Walter was a maverick in architectural circles. A quiet and sensitive man, with little interest in politics or business management, 'Mr Pink' nonetheless had a profound impact on the CMC's success and on the modern movement in Britain. An architect, furniture designer, painter, industrial engineer, propagandist and journalist, there were few creative projects at the firm Walter did not directly influence, from factory signage to Ideal Home exhibitions. An enthusiastic reader of H.G. Wells, Walter incorporated his faith in scientific progress into his

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[46] CMC, Board Minutes (July 1925); Carpenter, *Mr Pink*, 20; Crosby *et al.*, 'Workers' Houses in Essex', 111.
[47] *The Builder* (9 January 1919, 16 April 1920); Richardson and Aldcroft, *Building Between the Wars*, 138-40.
[48] Carpenter, *Mr Pink*, 22; Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 19-20.

artistic worldview. His most profound influence on the modern movement (other than Silver End) was as the chief architect of the modern steel window, particularly those designed with horizontal bars which came to symbolise International Modernism.[49] Publicly defending modernist aesthetics and principles, Walter maintained standardisation and simplicity highlighted the beauty of function. Following a trip to Germany in late 1926, around the time the Stuttgart's famous Weissenhof Estate was under construction, Walter's enthusiasm for the machine aesthetic strengthened.[50] Taking aim at conservative tabloid newspapers, which he claimed stifled innovation and creativity, he praised European modernism for 'embodying the spirit of the twentieth century […] an honest attempt at something to represent our own time' rather than the sea of vernacular buildings that were 'skeletons of a bygone age […] a cheap triumph at the expense of the past.' Modernism embraced the future – the wireless, the telephone, central heating – while allowing form, simplicity and efficiency to define beauty. Industrial infrastructure, he maintained, should not be concealed, but celebrated as the 'real prosperity of the town depends upon its prosperous existence.' Orthodox vernacular architecture, he argued forcefully, was merely romanticised because 'such buildings have been the habitations and properties of our social superiors' for centuries, and deference to aristocratic authority was ingrained.[51] The CMC and British Bata, however, thought of themselves as a new form of authority: industrial, professional, corporate and self-made.

Although modernistic architecture in Britain was unpopular, its unrepressed faith in technology did mirror Britain's wider embrace of 'modernity.' It was the aesthetic representation of the great technological leap western civilisation was experiencing – the architectural equivalent of

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[49] John Crittall interview with Thea Thompson (1974-77, British Library C707/518/1-2); Carpenter, *Mr Pink*, 7-16: his creative involvement with the firm ended in 1940.
[50] *Crittall Magazine* (January 1925); CMC, Board Minutes (August 1926).
[51] *Crittall Magazine* (December 1926, May 1928).

air travel, electric tube trains, motor vehicles, the cinema and the wireless. The movement embraced new materials and forms, fetishized machine products, labour-saving shapes and designs, mechanised construction and new technology, but it was not until after 1918 that it took philosophical and physical form through the likes of Frank Lloyd Wright in the USA, and Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Peter Behrens, J.J.P. Oud and Willem Dudok in Europe. Never a unified movement, modernists broadly shared a belief that beauty was not derived from ornamentation (as critics like John Ruskin had maintained) and interpreted traditional architecture as an impure, irrational and decadent anachronism. Modernists designed styles divorced from the past that championed rational planning, functionalism and science. Utilising new advances in the use of concrete, glass and steel, their designs intended to maximise light and space, and usually shared motifs including flat roofs, an absence of decoration, cubism, abundant use of glass, horizontal steel windows, unadorned white walls and unrestricted internal layouts. The appearance of such buildings was often considered opposed to nature, where strict lines and smooth, featureless surfaces were seldom observed.[52] Probably the most influential of these architects was Swiss-born Le Corbusier, who 'look[ed] upon the house as a machine for living in.'[53] While he produced few working-class homes, his German counterpart, Walter Gropius, shared his utopianism and did design several working-class estates using concrete and standardised techniques. As director of the Bauhaus, he likewise celebrated mechanised artwork, although he preferred the 'honesty' of cubism more than Le Corbusier.[54]

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[52] John Ruskin, *Lectures on Architecture and Painting* (Edinburgh: Allen, 1904); Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, 'The Modern Movement in Britain', *Twentieth Century Architecture* 8 (2007), 13-22; Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 1-2; Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (Penguin, 1991, first published 1936), 19-38.
[53] Le Corbusier, *New Architecture*, 240.
[54] Cherry and Pevsner, 'Modern Movement in Britain', 21-25; Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 78-89.

Walter Crittall's admiration of these influential architects was not widely shared in Britain, but he was not alone in attempting to integrate art and design with industrial mass production. The Design and Industries Association (DIA), formed in 1915, had been inspired by the Deutscher Werkbund's efforts to partner design professionals and product manufacturers to create industrial art, with the latter becoming an important forerunner of the European modern movement. The DIA was a keen advocate of modernism in Britain and shared a technological eutopian belief that mass-production, particularly in furniture and domestic items, could liberate humanity from want. Arriving at modernism from the Arts and Crafts idea of 'fitness for purpose', the DIA advised manufacturers to adopt the machine aesthetic, and promoted the idea of 'efficient' homes, free from of unnecessary and costly decoration.[55] Walter had been an active member of the DIA for almost two decades up until 1934, writing for the association's journal and co-edited its magazine.[56] He was heavily influenced by Walter Gropius, who advanced the idea that technology and mechanisation could revolutionise society (particularly after 1923), reduce physical toil and increasing time for creative outputs. Gropius' belief in the power of technology encapsulated the optimism of the age of machines: if architecture was 'the crystalline expression of man's noblest thoughts, his ardour, his humanity, his faith [and] his religion', as he argued, then this new age promised both physical and spiritual emancipation.[57]

If the Cressing Road-Clockhouse Way estate was an early, flawed foray into what would become Silver End, Zlín's relationship with East Tilbury was quite the opposite: the English colony was intended to imitate the technological utopianism of its Czechoslovakian mother

[55] Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, 33-37; Suggs Ryan, *Ideal Homes*, 56, 78-79, 119.
[56] Carpenter, *Mr Pink*, 2, 44.
[57] Loureiro, 'Revolutionary Mind of Gropius', 174-193; Jack Pritchard, 'Gropius, the Bauhaus and the Future', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 117, (1969), 75-94.

city. British audiences may, indeed, have been aware of the supposed miracle city. Two years before Beveridge's 'modern utopia', the English journalist Hubert Hessell Tiltman published his first-hand analysis of Europe's 'hardest winter in a century' in *Slump!* (1932), where he despaired at the future of Europe as international trade collapsed during what he foresaw as the 'twilight of the bourgeoisie.' Amid the ruins, however, Tiltman saw hope only in Zlín, which he declared 'the town the slump forgot' and, rather pointedly, the only industrial region where there was 'no whisper of the influence of Moscow.' The reason for the city's success, and consequently Europe's continued hope for liberal capitalism, was Bata's embrace of technology and technocracy, which, he maintained, had generated greater efficiency, output, wages, purchasing power and consumption. Throughout the continent wages and jobs were falling and prices rising, but not in Zlín. The unrepressed embrace of the latest methods of production and the 'highly rationalised' organisation at Bata's modern factories meant the firm had achieved what even Henry Ford had failed to do, and continue to beat output records during the Depression. 'Rigidly standardised' scientific management, vertical integration, and an immense sub-division of labour processes had, Tiltman declared, reduced the price of Bata footwear, maximised worker output, improved profits and increased wages.[58]

Three years later, as East Tilbury was taking physical form, the link between technological utopianism and liberal capitalism was made more explicit to British audiences. Speaking on the BBC series 'Great Social Experiments Abroad' in 1936, Conservative MP Victor Cazalet declared Zlín the 'capitalist experiment' to Russia's communist one, describing it as the land of tomorrow. The purpose of the programme, as a BBC director privately noted, was 'to show that it was not necessary to look to state action for far-reaching social experiments, but these

[58] Hubert Hessell Tiltman, *Slump! A Study of Stricken Europe Today* (Jarrolds, 1932), 5-18, 72-85, 119-150.

were equally possible under a capitalist regime.' Echoing much of Tiltman's analysis, Cazalet proclaimed 'individualism', 'planning without state control' and technology had created not only one of Europe's richest families, but also the healthiest city in Czechoslovakia.[59] In both accounts, therefore, we see echoes of Beveridge's faith in technology and technocracy to rejuvenate capitalism and realise the utopian principles of efficiency as universal opulence and justice as unity of interests.

In Zlín, Bata's exaltation of technology and technocracy as a panacea for the ills of society was also witnessed in the construction of the city. As in Britain, the garden city model was widely adopted in Czechoslovakia after 1918 – whose town planners were in regular contact with the movement in England – but unlike in Britain so too was modern architecture.[60] Having studied Ebenezer Howard's philosophy in Britain before 1914, Bata's chief architect Jan Kotera became an ardent modernist after the war and by 1920 created a standardised housing design for Bata dwellings. Kotera's pupil František Gahura, an engineer more than an artist, continued this uniformity in housing but also designed standardised town plans for the enterprise. Vladimir Karfik, who had trained under Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright and also advocated garden city principles, was employed as head of Bata construction between 1930 and 1946.[61] The employment of these in-house professionals demonstrates the firm's faith in scientific management and technocratic planning. True freedom, Tomas Bata reasoned, was 'a home shielded from neighbours and located in green space, air and sunshine', but this vision was only possible if houses were built cheaply, functionally, and using the latest techniques.[62]

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[59] Federation of British Industries, Broadcasts by BBC – Bata, Zlín (1936, MSS.200/F/3/S1/30/10).
[60] Pavitt, 'The Bata Project', 37-38.
[61] Eric Jenkins, 'Utopia, Inc. Czech Culture and Bata Shoe Company Architecture and Garden Cities', *Thresholds* 18 (1999), 63-64; Smith, 'Bata Estate', 58-59.
[62] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 108, 139-41.

From the 3,000-seat cinema, high-rise hotel, cubist houses, glass-panelled shop fronts and state-of-the-art hospitals, Zlín oozed modernism. Images of Zlín were regularly published in the *Bata Record* as an aspiration for East Tilbury.[63] Visiting the city in 1935 to judge an architectural housing competition, Le Corbusier praised its 'luminous appearance' and claimed it was 'an extraordinary world, a new world.'[64] Three years later, the firm completed work on one of the tallest buildings in Europe, an office block with a glass corner executive office for Jan Bata that doubled as an elevator, allowing him to oversee any floor in a panopticon-like working environment.[65] The same enthusiasm was reflected in Bata's domestic architecture, where the firm, like the CMC, pioneered modernistic working-class housing. The company had already embraced the modernist idioms of functionality, utility and economy before it began building flat, concrete-slab roofs in 1927 (the same year the aesthetic was adopted in Silver End, and two years after the influential International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris). Designed to maximise light, air and space, the company applied the same philosophy of mass-production to housing policy, using standardised designs and construction techniques. The Bauhaus-inspired housing (Image 4.2), as Tiltman observed, was a 'considerable advance on the general housing standard of the district', which were often overcrowded. Modernistic design was believed to improve hygiene and comfort, while most houses also had running water, a bathtub, electricity, gas stoves, central heating and telephones.[66]

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[63] *Bata Record* (1934-39).
[64] Quoted in Jenkins, 'Utopia, Inc', 63; and Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 56-57.
[65] Jenkins, 'Utopia, Inc', 60.
[66] Tiltman, *Slump!*, 145; Adamski, 'Bata's Zlín', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 225-32; Musil *et al.*, ''Czech mate for Letchworth', *Town and Country Planning* 53:11 (1984), 314-15.

Image 4.2: Modernistic Bata family housing in Zlín (1935) (Source: TBU Archive, Bata University in Zlín)

There is little wonder these self-consciously 'modern' employers enthusiastically adopted the machine aesthetic. In the professionalised, corporate city of Zlín, governed by Bata's army of architects, managers, social workers, municipal (company) officials and town planners, the firm looked to technocracy as the solution to liberal capitalism's woes.[67] At Zlín and the firm's other colonies, they believed in fostering new lifestyles for modern humans. When settling at East Tilbury, British Bata declared itself 'a pioneer of progress and helper of better living in Essex' because of its 'modern, efficient' approach to living and working.[68] In praising its five-day week, *Bata Record* editor Arthur Bartram Savage claimed greater productive efficiency meant workers could enjoy more 'freedom and leisure.'[69] This attitude was injected into Bata's

[67] Meller, *European* Cities, 127-30.
[68] *Bata Record* (25 May, 13 July 1934).
[69] *Ibid* (30 November 1934).

housing design. Tomas proclaimed his ambition was to 'liberate women from the last vestiges of domestic drudgery' by providing rationalised floor plans (an interwar belief widely shared and pioneered in Britain) and mechanised kitchens.[70] Theresa Adamski has outlined how women were taught to use new appliances and maintain higher levels of cleanliness, nominally to save labour (although often increasing it).[71] At East Tilbury, the firm praised its 'delightful' and 'desirable' three-bedroom modernistic homes, a near imitation of those in Zlín, as equally liberating through the use of gas stoves, electric power, hot piped water and an energy-efficient designs.[72] Both the Cressing Road-Clockhouse Way estate and Zlín foreshadowed what would emerge at Silver End and East Tilbury: technocratic and scientifically managed settlements of a seemingly realised future, boldly reflected through architecture.

Technological Utopias Realised? East Tilbury and Silver End

Silver End was intended to embody this technological and technocratic utopianism, too. Richard Reiss, a pioneer of the garden city movement and director at Welwyn Garden City, outlined this baldly in *The Crittall Magazine* in December 1926, several months after construction began on the village. As a consultant on the project, his article declared an end to 'haphazard' and disorganised town planning, and suggested Silver End would be the 'ambitious' model of a professionalised approach to urban development. Its master plan (see Image 4.3) embraced the fundamental concepts of the garden city, including zonal segregation of land, low-density housing (maximum of eight per acre), an abundance of recreational green space and plenty of communal buildings: Silver End, he assured Crittall workers, would be

[70] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 142-43. On the Frankfurt kitchen and other innovations, see Mark Llewellyn, 'Designed by women and designing women: gender, planning and the geographies of the kitchen in Britain 1917-1946', *Cultural Geographies* 11:1 (2004), 42-60.
[71] Adamski, 'Bata's Zlín', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 226-31.
[72] *Bata Record* (24 August 1934).

'infinitely better than anything which can be found in an older town.'[73] Reiss maintained Silver End's isolation truly made it unique, and this 'revolution in the countryside', as the *Chelmsford Chronicle* later put it, certainly did not lack ambition.[74] It went further than merely providing a local solution to unemployment, slums, a housing crisis and business expansion: it intended to significantly raise living standards through the construction of quality housing, excellent working conditions and ample leisure opportunities. Modernity arrived in the form of spacious homes with piped clean water, the latest drainage systems, electricity and indoor toilets, built alongside company-owned or managed farms, department stores, restaurants, leisure and sporting facilities, civic buildings and 'public' transport. It was a total environment, technocratically planned, built and maintained.

On the surface, the business motivations were clear. The CMC attacked local governments in Witham and Braintree for failing to build enough housing for its growing workforce, and the firm also sought a factory for the manufacture of window fittings – around 500,000 per week – as part of its vertical integration. By the mid-1920s, Braintree had a population of around 18,000, but 10,000 were estimated to have been Crittall employees and their families.[75] Having exhausted all local labour supplies (one-third cycled to work in 1929) the company initially toyed with building more houses near the Clockhouse Way-Cressing Road estate, but rejected the plan due to cost. Part of the motivation, however, was the company wanted to be free of local government interference, which it considered anathema to industrial interests.[76] The 220-acre site at Silver End was ideally situated just four miles from both Braintree and Witham. As one employee put it, the residents 'should want for nothing. Where corporations would

[73] *Crittall Magazine* (December 1926).
[74] *Chelmsford Chronicle* (16 April 1926).
[75] *The Times* (7 September 1926); King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 19-24.
[76] *Crittall Magazine* (December 1925); *Daily Mail* (18 December 1930).

have stopped was only half-way for the Guv'nor, and the result is a community complete from the foundations to the last brick in the chimney.'[77]

Despite the best efforts of the British Bata and the CMC, the failure to sufficiently resolve the housing situation in interwar Britain exposed the fallacy that unfettered market forces could meet the demands of the people. By 1918, the government reluctantly admitted state intervention in the housing market was unavoidable, yet the Addison Act (1919) which aimed to greatly expand local authority building was underfunded and produced underwhelming results: only 214,000 of the planned 500,000 dwellings were built. Yet by 1921, with housing demand believed to have risen to at least 805,000 (thanks to an increased number of families), the Conservative government rowed back on state-led policies by capping council houses and instead provided small subsidies for speculative builders. But with materials, interest rates and labour costs high, builders were reluctant to erect working-class houses and opted to target middle-class owner-occupiers. Although this policy was somewhat reversed by the Wheatley Act (1924, Labour), which was considered successful in producing 508,000 homes, in allowing profitability to determine social policy the crisis deepened: by 1928, it was estimated at least 1 million houses were unfit for habitation and a further 2 million were overcrowded.[78] Of the almost 4 million houses built between the wars, 72% were built by private enterprise. The situation certainly improved after 1933, thanks to a sharp increase in privatively built houses (fuelled by low interest rates) and slum clearance policies, but despite the unprecedented and unparalleled expansion of government housing, overreliance on conventional liberal economics meant that by 1939 the situation was still unresolved. As Britain plunged into total

[77] Quoted in Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 122-23, 135-36.
[78] John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815-1970* (Devon: David and Charles, 1978), 217-37; Richardson and Aldcroft, *Building Between the Wars*, 81-86, 100-102, 167-73.

war once again it was still short of around 600,000 houses, with roughly one-third of its housing stock in need of modernisation and another third of very poor, slum-like quality.[79]

For the Crittall family, and to a lesser extent the Batas, their utopian communities sought to demonstrate private enterprise could generously provide for the working class. Where successive governments had failed to build enough 'homes for heroes', Silver End and East Tilbury promised 'ideal' houses. Essex was in particular need as the intolerable conditions of urban slums were usually matched by rural housing, which often lacked piped water, indoor bathrooms, gas or electricity supplies.[80] While housing demand in Thurrock was less acute, in Witham a reluctant Conservative council only completed its first large council development in 1932, and these houses were too expensive for moderate incomes. It was not until the late 1930s that cottages in the town (140) were demolished because they were considered 'unfit for human habitation', such was the need to maintain them.[81] In a letter to Silver End residents, Francis Crittall lambasted the council for doing 'the minimum possible to give a decent standard of life to its working-class population' by allowing 'slum ownership to go unchecked.' At Silver End, Francis claimed, he had tried to 'provide them with a material framework' from which residents could 'find as many of the material accessories of happiness as one can expect in this sorry world.'[82]

As with Clockhouse Way-Cressing Road, the development of Silver End moved remarkably quickly. The land was purchased in late 1925, a town plan was roughly agreed in December in consultation with Reiss and architect C. Murray Hennell, and by January 1926 the first sod had

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[79] Burnett, *Social Housing*, 234-46; Richardson and Aldcroft, *Building Between the Wars*, 179-87.
[80] *Builder* (26 August 1932); Spike Mays, *Reuben's Corner* (Book Service, 1969).
[81] Witham Urban Council, *Report of the Medical Officer for the Year 1933* (ERO A8184); Janet Gyford, *A History of Witham* (Witham, 2005), 122-25.
[82] Ken Cuthbe records (ERO A8184); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 145.

already been cut, two months before an outline had been confirmed.[83] They planned to build 500 homes in five years, and while only 476 were eventually completed the village differed little from the 1927 plan seen in Image 4.3. In March the foundation stone of the first house was laid by Francis Crittall, during which he declared Silver End residents would 'enjoy amenities on a scale which few English villages can boast.'[84] By the end of 1926 the factory and powerhouse had been completed, along with 50 houses; by late 1927 the tea rooms and village hall were built, plus 177 homes; while construction slowed thereafter, by the end of 1932 all homes had been constructed together with two small churches, an elementary school, a hotel, the department stores, the telephone exchange and various agricultural buildings.[85] With characteristic efficiency and control, the CMC formed a separate company (although operated as a subsidiary), the Silver End Development Company (SEDC), to oversee the building of the village, which directly employed all 300 people involved in its construction. In total, the village probably cost around £600,000 to build.[86]

[83] CMC, Board Minutes (October 1925, March 1926); Burnett, *Social Housing*, 257.
[84] *Chelmsford Chronicle* (23 April, 26 April 1926); Thurgood, 'Silver End Garden Village', 36.
[85] Thurgood, 'Silver End Garden Village', 36-42.
[86] *Crittall Magazine* (February 1927); CMC, Board Minutes (January 1931); Crosby, 'Silver End Model Village', 76.

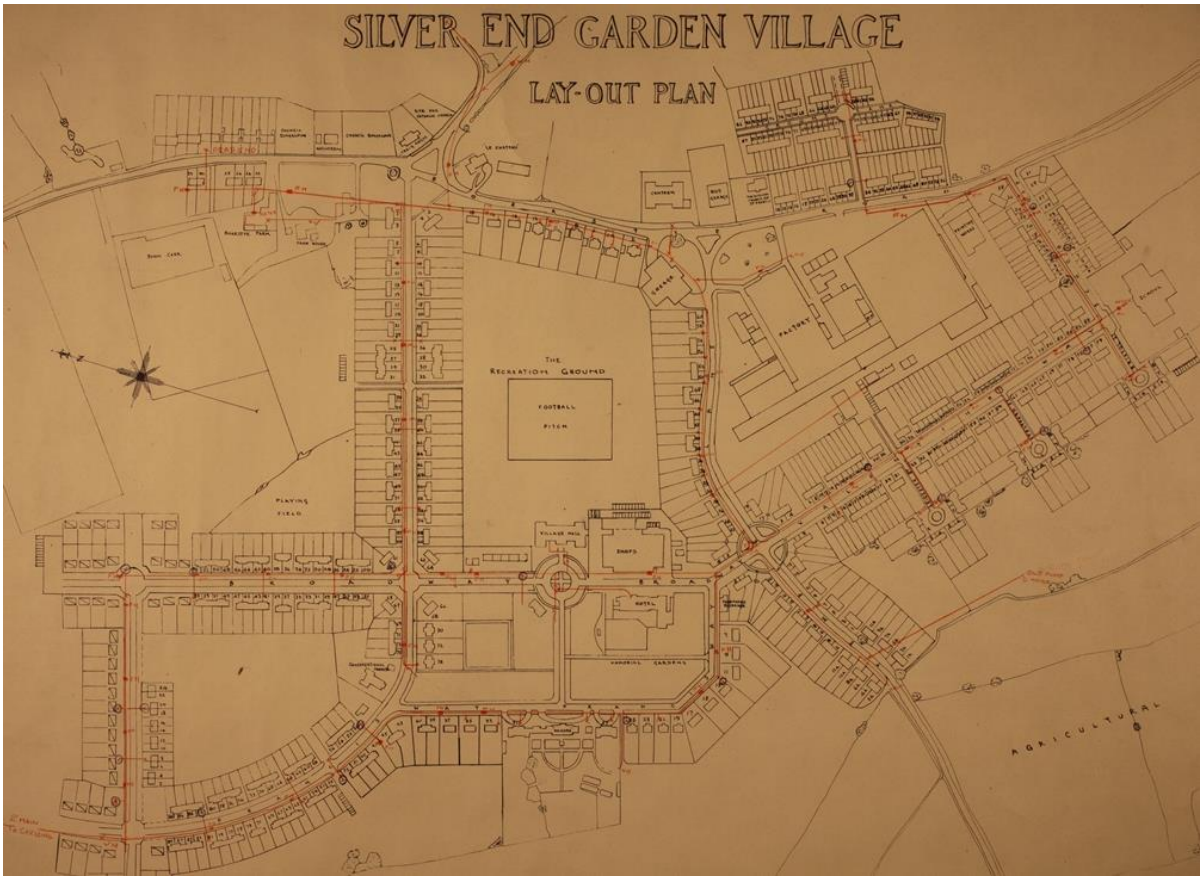


Image 4.3: Plan for Silver End c. 1927 devised by the company, Richard Reiss and C. Murray Hennell (ERO D/DU 1656/1)

Fearing regimentation or monotony, the SEDC contracted multiple architects to build in several styles. Partly as an attempt to highlight the versatility of Crittall windows, two-thirds of the housing in Silver End was built in a neo-Georgian style similar to those at Welwyn, with pitched or hipped roofs (Image 4.5). The cheapest of these, the two-bedroom non-parlour houses, cost just £300 to build thanks to government subsidies; three-bedroom parlours cost £460 after subsidies.[87] Later houses, built between 1928 and 1930, adopted a modernistic aesthetic, as pictured in Image 4.4. Designed initially by Charles Quennell but thereafter by the SEDC's in-house team of architects, led by James Miller and George Clare, the 150 modernistic homes cost roughly the same as their neo-Georgian equivalents but adopted a cubist form. Brick-built but rendered in stucco, these semi-detached and terrace houses used key international

[87] SEDC, Board Minutes (March 1927); Carpenter, *Mr Pink*, 25-26; Crosby, 'Silver End Model Village', 79-80.

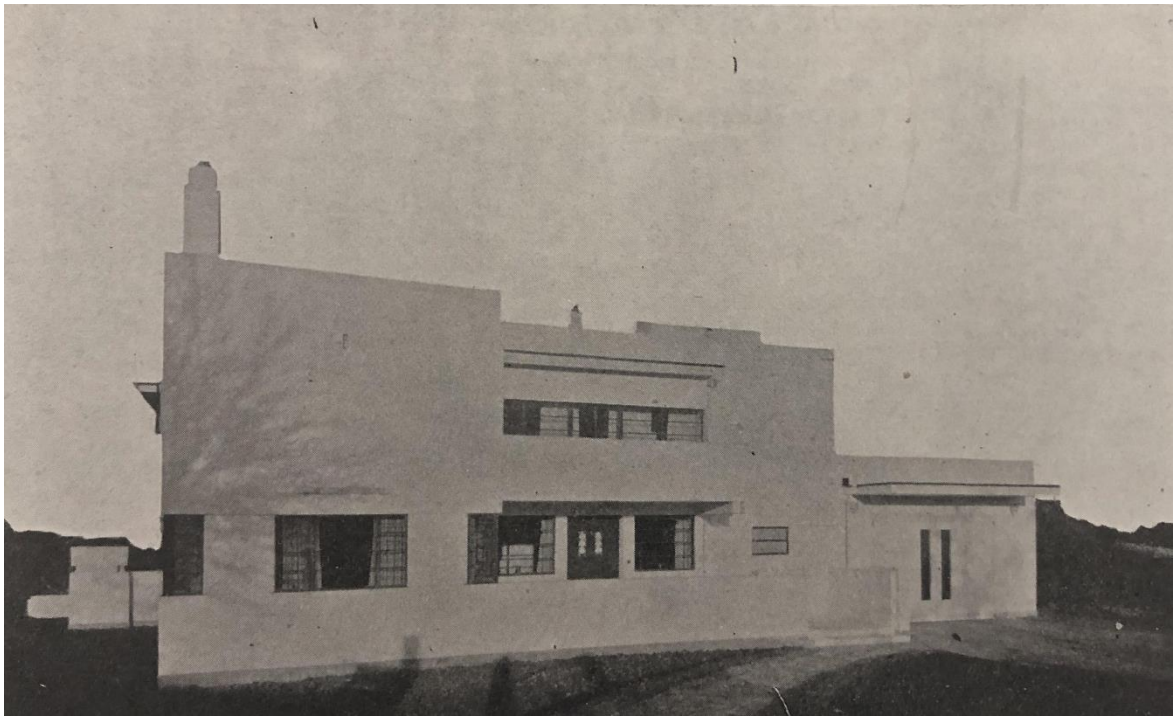
modern movement tropes including flat-roofs, unadorned exteriors, standardised Crittall metal windows with horizontal glazing, ivory colouring, and colourful windows (green) and doors (blue, orange or green). Although most varied little in style, including similar patterns of fenestration and cantilevered entrance canopies, many of the modernistic houses also had decorative fins and V-shaped first-storey windows.[88] Although Walter Crittall was the chief exponent of this style, his father appears to have embraced the philosophy of the modern movement, later writing he was happy to 'sacrifice traditional design in cause of light and space.' Function and utility for residents, Francis maintained, came before the needs of the 'passer-by'.'[89] The fact that numerous postcards of the village were produced indicates the village's 'utopianism' was commercialised, as is also evidenced by the number of visitors to the village (discussed in chapter four).

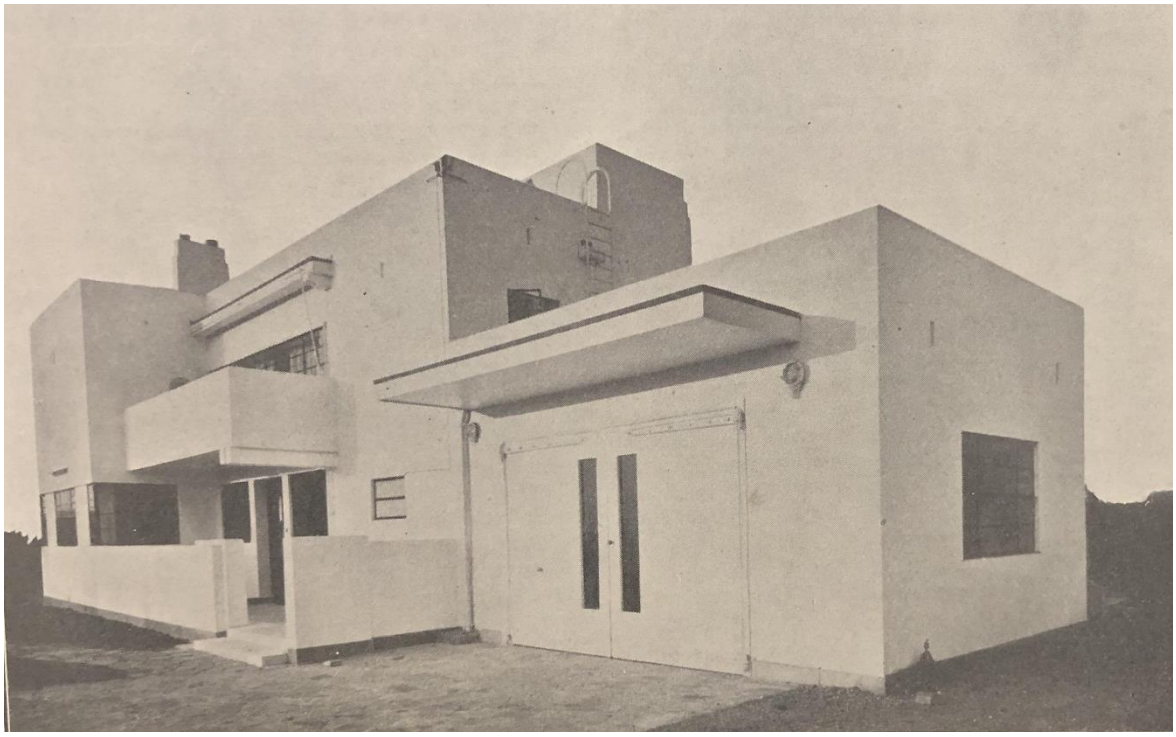
[88] Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 30-34; Thurgood, 'Silver End Garden Village', 37-39.
[89] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 130-31.

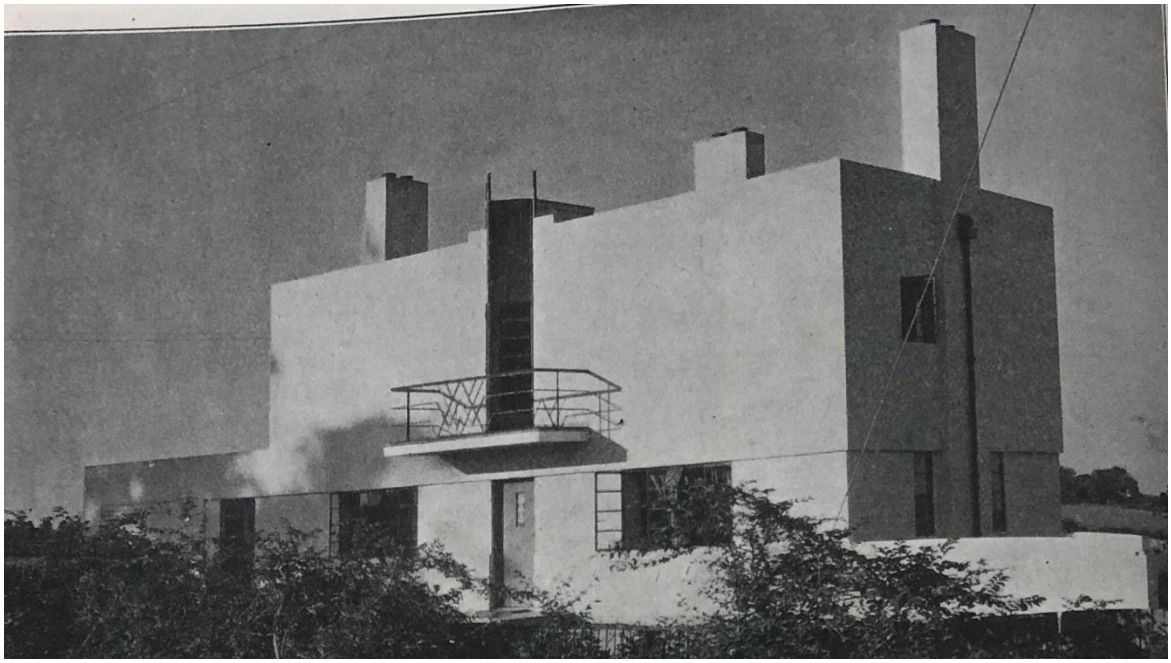
Postcards of Silver End from the early 1930s. Image 4.4 (above): Silver Street, containing terrace and semi-detached modernistic housing. Image 4.5 (below): Neo-Georgian working-class housing on Valentine Way (Tuck Images)

The working-class modernistic homes were largely emulating the three managers' houses built in 1927. The grandest of these, Le Chateau, (Images 4.6 and 4.7) was designed by the highly regarded Thomas Tait, known for the Kodak Building (1910-1911), Selfridges (1919-1924), Adelaide House (1920-1925) and, later, Unilever House (Blackfriars, 1929-32) and Tait Tower (Empire Exhibition, Glasgow, 1938).[90] Built for Dan Crittall, Francis' youngest son and a manager at the Silver End factory, Le Chateau was only the second explicitly modernistic house built in Britain, and the first by a British architect. The asymmetrical four-bedroomed house also used rendered brick, a flat roof, and horizontally banded green windows, but contained decorative features including a balcony with a porthole, corner windows, a sunroom and stained glass. At £3000, or over six times the cost of a working-class house, Tait was meticulous in his detail and even designed the radiators, furniture, carpet and gateposts. He claimed to have been motivated by 'the simple beauty of utility' in choosing to abandon 'frilly gables, nooks and petty-pretty roof work.' Le Chateau was followed by two further modernistic mangers' houses, Wolverton (Image 4.8) and Craig Angus, designed by Frederick MacManus but overseen by Tait. Similar in style, these houses also embraced crisp, linear lines and decorative features like V-shaped windows and ornamental fins.[91]

[90] David Walker, 'Tait, Thomas Smith', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2010, www.oxforddnb.com).
[91] Quoted in John McDonald, *Modern Housing: A Review of Present Housing Requirements* (1931), 72. Carpenter, *Mr Pink*, 25-32; Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 29-33; Thurgood, 'Silver End Garden Village', 37-39.







Images 4.6 and 4.7: Le Chateau (1927), designed by Thomas Tait for Dan Crittall. Image 4.8 (below): Wolverton (1927, *The Architect and Building News* (17 February 1928; 4 January 1929))

Modernism perfectly symbolised the CMC's technological utopianism. Crittall windows had, by the mid-1920s, become a vital component for modernist architects, both aesthetically and structurally. Steel windows were significantly stronger than wooden ones, obscured less light, and allowed larger surfaces for glass, thus providing architects with greater freedom in design. They could appear like walls of glass, too, and Crittall windows were used in some of the most iconic modernist designs around the world, from Walter Gropius' Bauhaus (Dessau, 1927) and Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water (Pennsylvania, 1939), to numerous modernistic factories, office blocks and public buildings in the UK.[92]

The machine-age housing caused a stir. In abandoning the vernacular, and choosing a style seemingly at odds with tradition and nature, the company were 'alternatively praised and blamed, flattered and condemned', as Francis Crittall put it: Silver End was labelled the 'City of

[92] *Design for Today* (March 1934); David Blake, 'Windows, Crittall and the Modern Movement' in *DOCOMO First International Conference 1990* (Eindhoven, 1991), 76-78.

2000AD', the 'Robot City' and 'A Village Without a Soul.'[93] Certainly, there were those, particularly locals, who disliked the style. A 1932 British Pathé newsreel of Silver End praised it as 'the newest of the new' where even cows (which were shown being cleaned by electric vacuums) were part of this technological advancement, but also admitted 'to old villagers ancient notions of houses seemed to have gone wrong.'[94] Locals recalled that it was 'very stark' (which was not helped by the removal of trees during construction) and it 'scandalised' the region. Some simply thought it looked 'horrible.'[95] The Crittall-owned *Braintree and Witham Times*, meanwhile, labelled it 'ultra-modern […] fifty years in advance of the times'; *The Crittall Magazine* called Le Chateau 'symbolic of the house of the future', and Silver End 'a unique creation […] a kind of utopia.' Silver End, the magazine argued, was evidence of human evolution, and demonstrated 'tremendous advances have been made from the somewhat cramped, badly lighted and not very beautiful houses of the past century […] what organised intelligence can do towards planning and building homes that are in keeping with the age.'[96]

The architectural press was more measured. Le Chateau was praised in *The Builder* for departing from tradition and embracing 'extreme simplicity'; *Architect and Building News* complemented its 'experimentally bold' willingness 'to escape the servitude to tradition.' This appreciation of functionalism and modernity was reflected in broader commentary of Silver End, which was described as reflecting the 'increasing speed of development, of invention, of civilisation itself […] a new outlook on life […] a new epoch on life.'[97] However, most critics stopped short of fully endorsing the new style. The flat roofs were considered incomplete, the

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[93] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 142-43.
[94] British Pathé, 'Yesterday's Homes and Today's' (14 July 1932, https://www.britishpathe.com/).
[95] Ruth Beardwell (29 March 1985) and Dorothy Hancock interviewed by Janet Gyford (13 December 1998 https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 5 March 2019).
[96] *Crittall Magazine* (November 1927, June 1928, April 1929); *Braintree and Witham Times* (13 March 1934).
[97] *Architect and Building News* (17 February 1928, 4 January 1929); *Builder* (18 May 1928).

sharp geometric lines lacked refinement and the rejection of natural beauty for industrial efficiency left a crude aftertaste. Embracing new designs did not necessarily mean advancing human society, and while challenging 'conservative' ideas of beauty was encouraged, the village was considered an experiment rather than a blueprint for a utopian future.[98]

Modernist architecture supported a worldview that placed material needs before tradition or spiritual wellbeing. The economic arguments and health benefits were not lost on all British commentators. The Modern Movement seemed to promise airier, more versatile, cleaner and safer workplaces, and was cheaper than vernacular styles. Steel windows were particularly highlighted as beneficial, too, as the admission of more sunlight was considered to improve health and reduce absenteeism.[99] Scottish architect John McDonald passionately argued flat roofs offered greater structural stability, less maintenance and repair, saved on material costs and better insulation. Health benefits included 21% less obstruction of sunlight into homes, and the opportunity for rooftop gardens and sun lounges. Modern movement housing, McDonald assured his readers, would not only improve physical and mental health but also solve major social problems including 'social deterioration, moral and sexual depravity, revolutionary unrest, crime and lunacy.'[100] This, of course, was on top of 'modern' designs which eliminated noise, and foul air, and labour-saving features in the home.[101] Some British advocates of the modern movement were captivated by this technological utopianism, claiming the style operationalised and befitted the era of the motor car; others, however, were entranced by the form, which rejected the 'mouldy' and 'ostentatious' past.[102]

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[98] *Architect and Building News* (17 February 1928); *Builder* (18 May 1928); *Guardian* (15 April 1929).
[99] For example, *Builder* (19 November 1926, 9 October 1931); *Architect and Building News* (4 November 1927); *Architects' Journal* (10 April 1929).
[100] McDonald, *Modern Housing*.
[101] Suggs Ryan, *Ideal Homes*, 64-65.
[102] *Builder* (13 January, 6 April 1928).

But while modernism was appreciated for its innovation, most critics and professionals dismissed the movement. It was seemingly tainted by foreign influences, its association with the commercial world and its bold rejection of the past. Aesthetically, it failed to win many hearts, which was particularly detrimental in a domestic market dominated by speculative builders looking for quick sales.[103] Those who planned to profit from modernistic houses generally failed, spectacularly in the case of Oliver Hill's upmarket estate at Frinton-on-Sea, where 1,100 homes were envisioned but only 35 were built. Local councils preferred neo-Georgian styles and even sympathetic voices considered modernism little more than a 'stunt.'[104] Most simply thought them ugly. One architect labelled them 'ludicrous […] they rank with the building produced by the average child with a box of bricks' while another called them 'appallingly hideous' and tantamount to 'madness.'[105]

At the core of these criticisms was the sense that modernism was dehumanising. The architectural trade considered it too much like engineering than art – a philosophy championed by East Tilbury's chief planner, Jan Kotera.[106] Function, it was argued, was no measure of beauty. Scottish architect Edwin Williams claimed that if this 'educated barbarity' was left unchecked it would bring 'mechanical desolation over the land.'[107] Albert Richardson echoed these sentiments, claiming the 'robotesque style' was fit only for a 'robot population' living in 'concrete coffins.'[108] Sir Reginald Blomfield, one of modernism's most vocal critics, repeatedly lambasted it for its crudeness, brutality and destruction of the past.[109] He maintained the British liked to think of their houses as having been erected from the earth itself, and the style

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[103] *Ibid* (13 April, 25 May 1928, 31 May 1929); Cherry and Pevsner, 'Modern Movement in Britain', 13-29.
[104] Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 103-7, 183-84.
[105] *Architecture* (April 1927); *Builder* (11 November, 25 November 1927).
[106] *Builder* (2 July 1937).
[107] *Town Planning Review* 17 (1937), 60-62.
[108] *Builder* (25 May 1928, 29 March 1929).
[109] *Ibid* (25 May 1928, 28 November 1930).

was therefore too foreign, artificial and 'egotistical.'[110] Architect Arthur Beresford took this further, claiming modernism was 'inhumane and brutal' and threatened to destroy the 'unrivalled' English countryside through 'freakish and illogical flouting of all the old traditional forms and principles.' For Beresford, however, his main criticism was that the form eroded 'the charm of traditional material and workmanship' in favour of the 'spirit of finance and advertising.'[111]

It was not just domestic architecture at Silver End that looked boldly towards the future. A swimming pool and cinema were both planned for the village – symbols of modernity – but were shelved. A hospital, too, was due to be opened in 1930 but was scrapped due to lack of money.[112] The two-storey stock brick village hall (Image 4.9) designed by Murray Hennell, contained a library, billiard and card room, restaurant, portrait gallery, infants' welfare clinic and dance hall with capacity for 400 people; it is still thought to be the largest village hall in England.[113] The hall, which included 20-foot floor-to-ceiling windows, was opened by the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Charles Batho, in May 1928. Its size indicates the ambition for the project: Silver End was intended to be far larger than its initial 500 homes. Indeed, this utopianism seems to have been shared by employees. Articles in *The Crittall Magazine* (not entirely tongue-in-cheek) celebrated Silver End as the model village of the future, where 'every house will have a flat roof on which the owner will park his aerocar.' Another wrote Silver End would be roughly the size of London by the year 2000, and technological advances would result in

[110] *Ibid* (13 April 1928, 11 January, 31 May 1929).
[111] *Ibid* (18 September 1931).
[112] SEDC, Board Minutes (April 1929); CMC, Board Minutes (May 1929).
[113] *Builder* (18 May 1928); James Bentley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Buildings of England: Essex* (Yale UP, 2007), 686-88.

three-day working weeks, the 'cultivation of racial beauty and circles of higher thought', and, again, flat roofs for 'Bat-wing' cars.[114]

Image 4.9: A postcard of Silver End village hall taken in the early 1930s (Tuck Images)

One of the most unique aspects of both Silver End and East Tilbury, an element absent from previous company villages, was attempted self-sufficiency. The CMC wanted to ensure Silver End 'was as self-supporting as possible' and therefore established a monopoly not only on employment and housing, but also daily necessities. The firm formed its own water and electricity supplies, while the initial site was supplemented by two further farms bought by Francis Crittall to supply the village. Fruit, vegetables and wheat were produced, and livestock of cows, pigs and chickens provided fresh milk, meat and eggs. The use of artificial fertilisers and the funding of research into pig rearing added to the sense of converting 'old-fashioned farming' into scientifically managed agricultural production.[115] The produce was sold, fittingly, in the restaurant, canteen, and opulent two-storey department stores pictured in Image 4.10.

[114] *Crittall Magazine* (April, September 1928, May 1929).
[115] *Ibid* (November 1926, February 1927); SEDC, *Souvenir from the Opening of the Village Hall* (1928), 17-18.

The latter borrowed from modernism in featuring a large portico and curtain walling. With 26 departments, many of which sold Silver-End-branded goods, the building radiated luxury, with the CMC calling it 'one of the finest retail shops this side of London […] it would not look out of place in the fashionable part of Oxford Street.'[116] Similarly, British Bata also operated and modernised farms. While less extensive than at Silver End, these provided milk, meat and eggs to residents, along with fruit, vegetables and potatoes.[117] In an attempt to realise Tomas Bata's dream of mechanised production, the farms used electric milking machines.[118]

Image 4.10: A postcard of Silver End department stores taken in the early 1930s (Tuck Images)

By 1932, as Silver End was being completed, plans for East Tilbury were being finalised. Tomas Bata had visited the site in December 1931, having chosen it from a shortlist of 35 others in Britain, and approved its construction after he took possession of the land in March 1932. At

[116] *Crittall Magazine* (October 1928); Thurgood, 'Silver End Garden Village', 39.
[117] Rumsey, *Bata Factory*.
[118] *Bata Record* (7 September 1934); Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 210; Smith, *East Tilbury Appraisal*, 19.

the time, the 520 acres bought by the firm (an area nearly equal the City of London) was one of the largest single purchases of land in Essex history.[119] Despite its good rail links and access to the Thames it was still 'curiously isolated', as one commentator put it. Immediately after the First World War, town planners had unsuccessfully proposed building 12,000 new homes for East End slum dwellers in and around East Tilbury, but by 1932 there existed just one small village of several hundred people.[120] The imposition of higher tariffs in Britain and other European nations curtailed Bata's exports, which had been trading very successfully in Britain under 'Cumfy-Feet', and threatened to limit its considerable growth.[121] Having already monopolised production in Czechoslovakia, the firm began to build a series of model company villages and towns throughout the world, thereby manufacturing directly in foreign countries and circumventing tariffs. Of the dozens of factories, enterprises and villages Bata built, the company deliberately chose areas of high unemployment and were subsequently labelled both saviours and exploiters. In Thurrock, for example, at least 2,000 people were looking for work in the early 1930s, thanks in part to a sharp decline in dock work.[122]

As expected, the creation of Bata company towns was both technocratic and optimistic: designs depicted rigorously planned metropolises built using standardised designs. While adopting garden city principles, the curving lines, cul-de-sacs, and leafiness of Silver End was absent in these mini-Zlíns. Functionalism took priority, and therefore plans for East Tilbury, as seen in Image 4.11, used simple geometry. Like Silver End, however, and unlike garden city ideals, factories were placed close to the community rather than on the periphery: a reminder

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[119] Smith, 'Bata Estate', 59-60.
[120] *Times* (20 April 1918); *Builder* (26 December 1930).
[121] Trades Union Congress (TUC), Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1); Rumsey, *Bata Factory*.
[122] Ondrej Ševeček, 'Company Towns', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 34-36; Rumsey, *Bata Factory*.

of the settlement's corporate identity.[123] Having first conceived of East Tilbury as a small factory producing football boots, planning quickly became far more ambitious. Despite the death of Tomas Bata in July 1932, which caused a short delay, his half-brother Jan Bata (now head of the company) pushed ahead with its construction. While no single master plan was produced, some envisioned that it would rival Zlín, with 40 factory buildings, an aerodrome and a theatre.[124] One plan included three ten-storey factories and 20,000 residents.[125] Another, from 1935, contained 1,000 houses and a sports stadium. The design and construction of Bata colonies was strictly controlled from Zlín, with little or no input from the 'colony.'[126] When Jan Bata visited East Tilbury in 1935, he claimed it could soon be as big as Zlín, and this was repeated by management who estimated it would be a vast metropolis by 1950.[127]

[123] Bentley and Pevsner, *Buildings of Essex,* 340-41; Smith, 'Bata Estate', 53-58.
[124] Tobias Ehrenbold, 'Putting Mohlin on the Map: The Swiss Bata Town', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 127; Smith, 'Bata Estate', 60.
[125] *Bata Record* (8 February 1935); Bentley and Pevsner, *Buildings of Essex,* 340-41.
[126] Smith, *East Tilbury Appraisal*, 20-21; 'Bata Estate', 53-62.
[127] *Bata Record* (17 May, 18 October 1935).

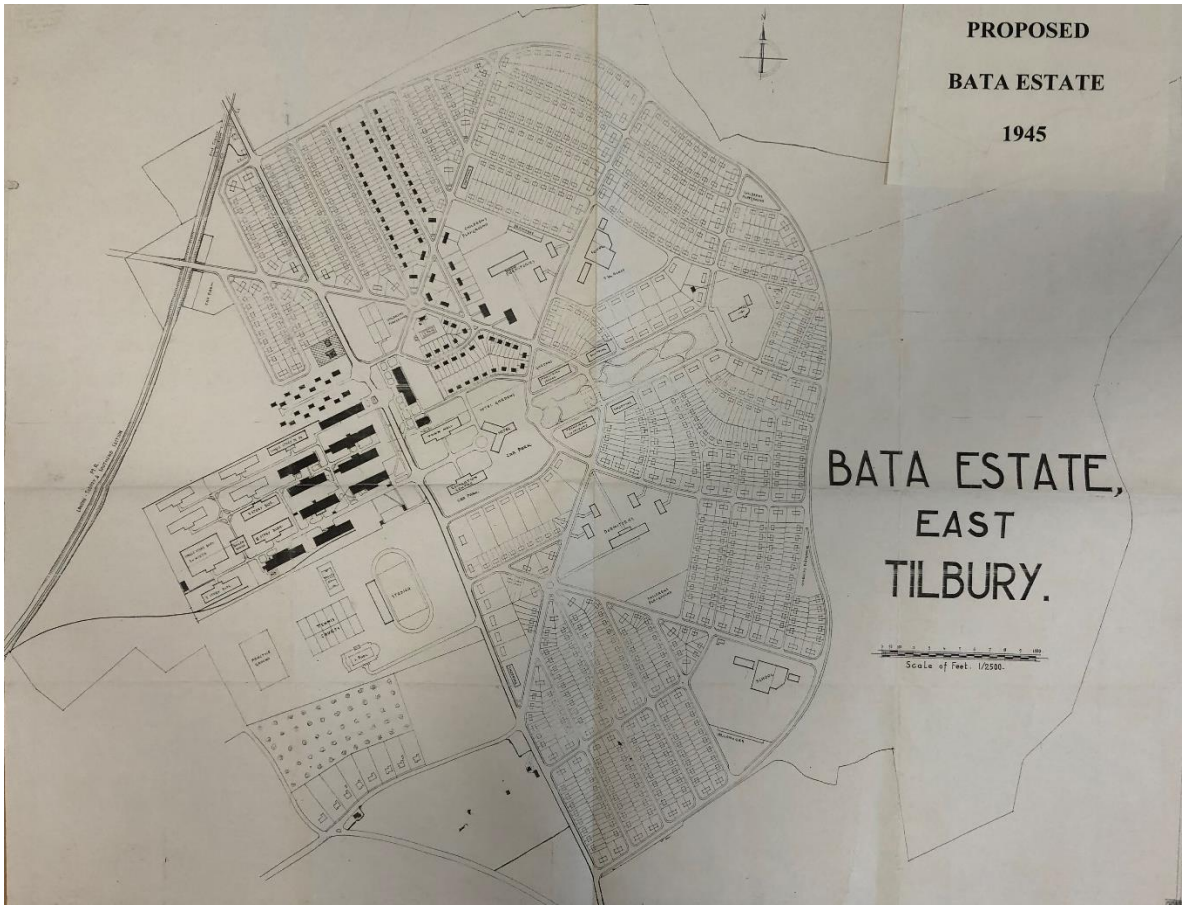

Image 4.11: One of many ambitious plans created for East Tilbury, this one from 1945. The buildings completed at the time are in black (Bata Heritage Centre)

Unlike Silver End, East Tilbury was not built within the space of just a few years, and dreams of an industrial garden city were largely unrealised. Construction began on the first single-storey factory in January 1933, and it was opened in September that year. By the end of 1935, it was joined by a five-storey factory, 32 houses along Bata Avenue (Images 4.12 and 4.13), sports facilities and two hostels for juvenile workers; the latter being large, modernistic two-storey, flat-roofed buildings (Image 4.12).[128] The five-storey Community House (Image 4.14) was completed in 1936 and was the centre of village life. Built using the same standardised construction methods as the multi-storey factories, Community House was emblazoned with a neon 'Bata' sign visible for miles and contained accommodation for single employees and

[128] *Bata Record* (28 September 1934, 8 April 1935); Smith, 'Bata Estate', 60.

visitors, a canteen catering for 1,000 people, a restaurant for management, a gymnasium, grocers, butchers, post office, Bata shoe store, hairdressers, snack bar and a large ballroom with a 650-person capacity. While it lacked a clothes store, bank and chemist, unlike Silver End, Community House broadly catered for residents' every daily need.[129] By 1938, when 1,500 workers were employed at East Tilbury, supplying 105 Bata shops in Britain, two more five-storey factory buildings had been constructed (see Images 4.17).[130] By 1968, 15 factory units had been built in the village, as well as tennis courts (1936), an 80ft open-air swimming pool (1936), a 350-person two-storey cinema (1938) and an espresso bar (1960). A temporary elementary school was built in 1939, and was replaced by a permanent, Bata-run private school in 1943.[131]

[129] Rumsey, *Bata Factory*; Smith, 'Bata Estate', 66.
[130] National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives (NUBSO), Council Minutes (January 1937, MRC 547/D/1/1/28-9); TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1).
[131] Rumsey, *Bata Factory*; Smith, *East Tilbury Appraisal*, 30-42.

Image 4.12 (top left): Modernistic houses and hostels on Bata Avenue in 1943. (Ludwig Jindra personal collection). Image 4.13 (top right): an image taken during the construction of Bata Avenue: the small bay windows and cream exterior are visible (*Bata Record*, 26 October 1934). Image 4.14 (below): Community House, c. 1937 (Bata Heritage Centre)

The majority of the 362 houses in the village were completed by 1941, although Bata continued to build after 1946. The first of these, 32 semi-detached three-bedroom houses, were built on Bata Avenue between 1933 and 1935 in a modernistic style as pioneered in Zlín. Designed by Gahura and Karfik, they differed from Zlín housing by their inclusion of small bay windows (probably an attempt to anglicise their designs) and by including a parlour: a symbol of working-class respectability. The unadorned cream houses used concrete roofs and walls, unlike the rest of the estate, but the bay windows and internal walls were made of brick.[132] As in Zlín, the company praised the houses as able to liberate the 'modern wife' from unnecessary toil.[133] Most of the houses on the estate were semi-detached, two- or three-bedroom rectangular houses that used (like other Bata colonies) standardised methods of construction, internal layouts and aesthetics, including flat-roofs and green Crittall windows. This only differed with managers' four-bedroom houses, which were usually placed on the ends of streets and were larger, with built-in garages and recessed first-floor balconies.[134] Privately, the company claimed the flat roofs alone reduced construction costs by 9%.[135] While some of the later houses used pitched roofs, which were mostly built between 1955 and 1963, 228 houses were constructed using flat roofs before 1955 (136 before 1938). By 1941, the estate included 190 houses plus the two hostels and Community House, which housed 370 people. Nevertheless, supply fell short of demand and while around 2,000 people lived in the village by this year, the firm was employing 2,500 at East Tilbury.[136]

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[132] Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 37-42; Smith, *East Tilbury Appraisal*, 35-40; Suggs Ryan, *Ideal Homes*, 49.
[133] *Bata Record* (24 August 1934).
[134] Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 37-42; Smith, 'Bata Estate', 64-65.
[135] TUC, British Bata Dispute, 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3).
[136] NUBSO, Council Minutes 1939-55 (October 1941, MRC 547/D/1/1/30-48); Smith, *East Tilbury Appraisal*, 35-40.

Housing was engineered to reflect employment and social status in both villages, with promotions being rewarded with larger houses, while single workers lived in separate gender-segregated accommodation. The villages incorporated all classes of society, and rents reflected this. The usual limit for poorer working-class residents in Britain, including rates, was 9*s* a week (slums were around 6*s*), and upper-working class residents usually 13*s*. Silver End rents ranged from just over 11*s* for a two-bedroom house to around 17*s* for a larger three-bedroom property (including rates, electricity and water charges). Similarly, East Tilbury rents started at 10*s* and rose to over 22*s* for a manager's house.[137] While neither were extremely cheap – both slightly more expensive than a council house of a similar size, both companies provided housing akin to middle-class suburbia but at a diversity of rents within the budgets of their employees.[138]

The factories built in the two villages also attempted to merge modernism, technology and welfare. As Vicky Long has argued, after 1918 there existed a new strain of 'utopian optimism' epitomised in the modernistic factory, which came to 'exemplify modernism and health' in this period. The cramped, dark and hazardous factories of the Victorian era were seemingly a nightmarish thing of the past, replaced by the sunbathed, healthy, airy and functional modern factory. These 'palaces of utopias', like Boots' Beeston factory (1933) (described at the time as the 'factory of utopia') and the Hoover Building in Perivale (1933) used the machine aesthetic and its emphasis on function, utility and versatility. New technologies in ventilation, heating, power, drainage, lighting and safety complemented welfare policies to maximise surveillance and productivity. Although rare, these temples to the modern movement, often set amid fields,

[137] SEDC, Rent Book for 75 Valentine Way (1928, SEHS); *Bata Record* (19 February 1937); Burnett, *Social Housing*, 235.
[138] Aldcroft and Richardson, *Building Between the Wars*, 93; McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 97.

epitomised Britain's relationship with modernity. As centres of commerce, they highlighted how modern architecture came to symbolise 'modern' capitalism between the wars.[139]

The factory at Silver End (Image 4.15) was not explicitly modernistic but did adopt many of its features including large steel windows, open floorplans and an unadorned façade. Internally, the electric-powered factory was well-ventilated and heated, had 'very numerous guards and protective devices' and its rural location was designed to emulate Henry Ford's 'gospel of decentralisation' to 'counteract the formation of ugly industrial centres.'[140] The factories were indicative of villages seemingly enlightened and emancipated by science. Silver End had 'every modern convenience' and its water was 'of the highest organic and bacterial purity', meaning 'death among youth is practically unknown.'[141] Its scientifically managed farms contained 'model' cow sheds built with 'artificial stone stallage, bitumen felting lined walls and sterilising paint'. Its 'palatial' piggeries had automatic watering, small railways and electric lighting, and were reportedly mistaken for churches.[142] The latest technology allowed them to produce 'the primest pork', the 'thickest and richest' cream, the 'purest' milk and the 'very finest' eggs in adverts stressing their health benefits.[143] The 'model' Silver End bakery and sausage factories used 'the most up-to-date-plant', the 'purest materials' and 'the most modern methods' to guarantee quality.[144] The CMC ceaselessly marketed Silver End as utopia realised. On numerous occasions Francis Crittall claimed the village had the highest birth rate and lowest death rate of any community in England, while employees were 'not only the happiest, but the

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[139] Cherry and Pevsner, 'Modern Movement in Britain', 26-30; Long, *Healthy Factory*, 2-9, 49-55, 72-81.
[140] *Crittall Magazine* (March 1928, February 1929).
[141] *Ibid* (June 1928); *Braintree and Witham Times* (9 September 1932).
[142] *Crittall Magazine* (February 1927); SEDC, *Opening of the Village Hall* (1928); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 141.
[143] *Crittall Magazine* (February, July 1927, May 1928, March 1929); *Silver End Monthly* (February-March 1929).
[144] *Crittall Magazine* (February 1928); *Braintree and Witham Times* (24 December 1930).

healthiest in all the jolly old land.'[145] For Francis, Silver End was the perfect answer to 'the ill-nourished, rickety, ill-educated, unemployed and unemployable offspring of a slum.'[146]

Nowhere was this narrative of liberation through technology more evident than in the hiring of disabled men at Silver End. By 1929, 27% of soldiers (1.6 million) had been awarded a gratuity or pension by the government for disabilities incurred during the war. Ex-servicemen often struggled to fully reintegrate back into society, given little opportunity to retrain, sustained high levels of national unemployment and a reluctance from employers who feared low productivity and workplace accidents.[147] Owing to the lighter nature of work at the window fittings factory, the CMC designed automatic and semi-automatic machinery so disabled men could operate them at the same productive capacity as the able-bodied, as seen in Image 4.16. White-collar workers, too, were employed such as a blind man who operated the telephone. While Francis Crittall told the national press that 'the employment of these men has justified itself commercially – not indirectly by the advertisement or sentimental appeal, but by figures on the balance sheet', the Crittall brand was certainly not harmed by this employment strategy.[148] Like Henry Ford, who maintained that of the 7,882 tasks needed to build one of his cars, 2,637 could be performed by a one-legged man and ten by blind men, Crittall also designated specific jobs to those with disabilities.[149] Before the factory was built, the firm employed roughly 200 disabled workers and most were transferred to the new operation: in 1927, shortly after starting production, 108 of the 119 people employed at Silver End were disabled, including 21 with dismembered limbs and 13 with 'shell shock or neurasthenia.'

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[145] *Crittall Magazine* (March 1925); *Braintree and Witham Times* (31 October 1930, 27 February 1931).
[146] *Crittall Magazine* (November 1927); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 144-45.
[147] Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War* (Palgrave, 2011), 97-119.
[148] *Daily Mail* (22 September 1928); *Braintree and Witham Times* (15 December 1932).
[149] Grandin, *Fordlandia*, 294.

Although it is unlikely significantly more disabled workers were later employed (in 1928, 115 of 321 employees were disabled), the hiring of these men epitomised the belief the 'wonders of production' could significantly improve lives.[150]

[150] *Crittall Magazine* (November 1926, June 1927); *Times* (24 September 1928). No evidence was uncovered of disabled workers at East Tilbury.

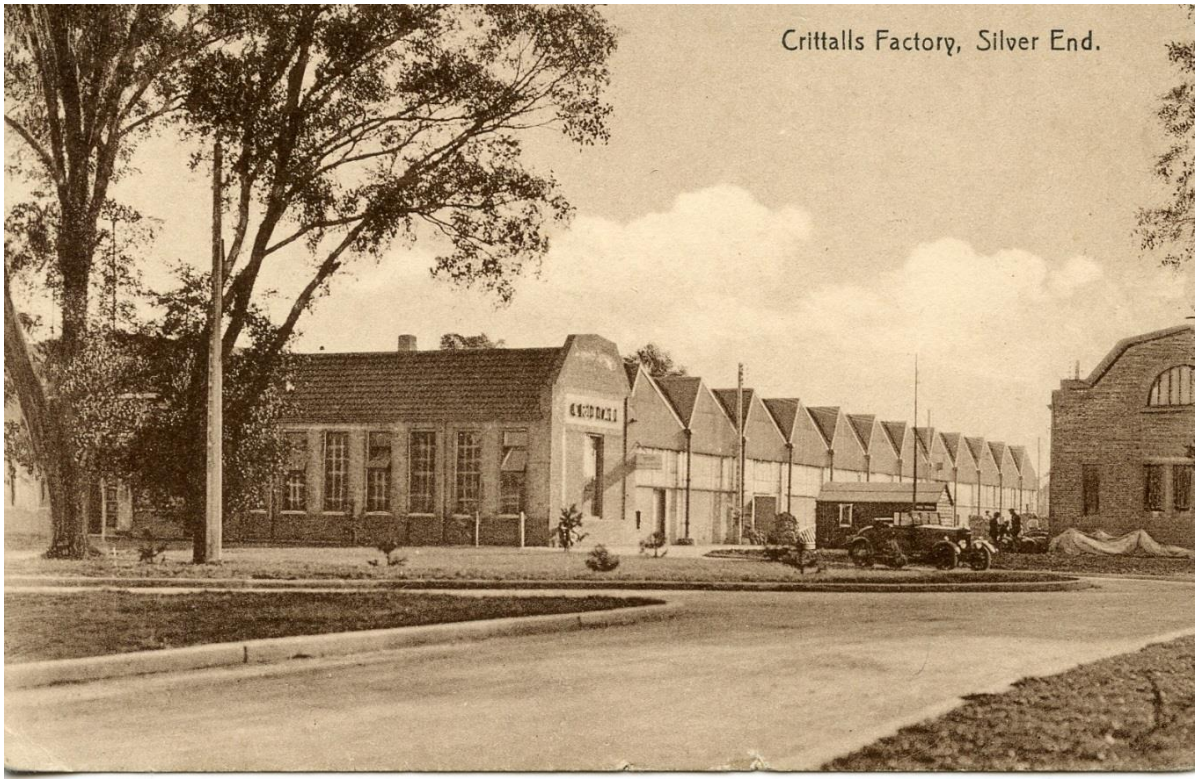

Image 4.15: A postcard of the Silver End fittings factory taken in the early 1930s; the factory used saw-tooth Crittall skylight windows (Tuck Images)

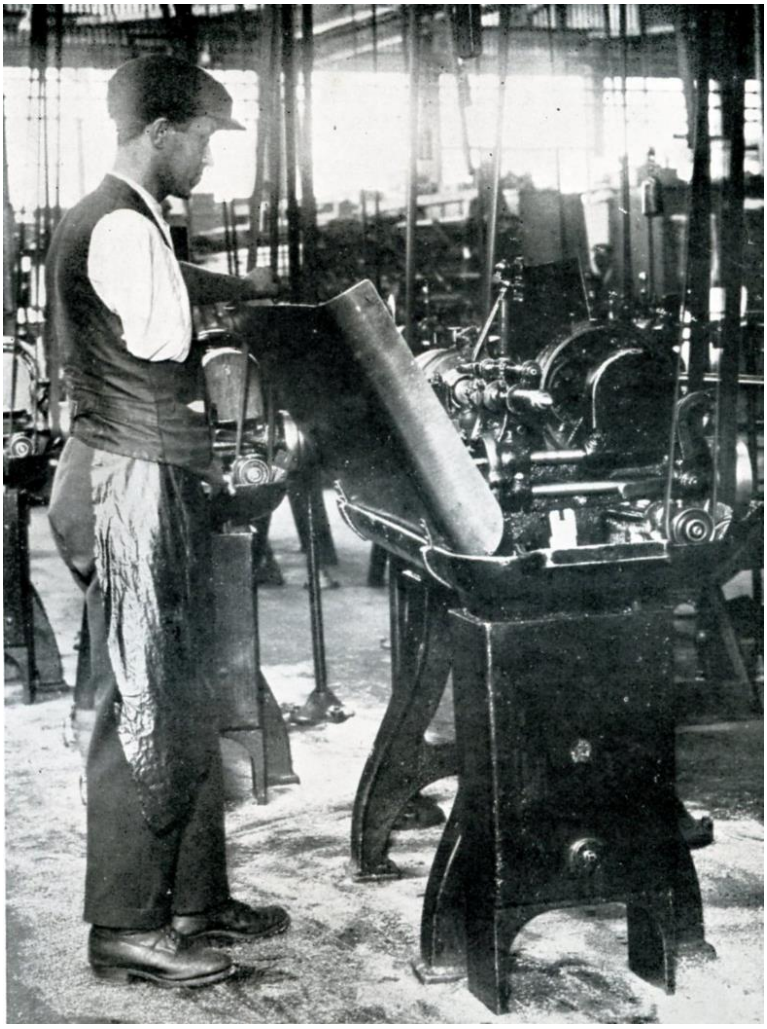

Image 4.16: A limbless disabled man operating a lathe in the factory, ca. early 1930s (SEHS)

At East Tilbury, cleanliness and safety were an important consideration. From hostels where juvenile workers were measured on the tidiness of dormitories twice a week, to the mandatory weekly cleaning of all machinery, the *Bata Record* called for employees and residents to emulate the efficiency and hygiene in Zlín. Local politicians visited the factory and praised its cleanliness, while union accusations of poor working conditions were countered by articles hailing the spacious and pleasant factories.[151] Regular medical examinations, a ban on smoking and eating in factories, a company fire brigade, and scientifically engineered meals designed to maximise productivity all added to this sense of regimented modernity.[152] Modernity was also expressed in the Bata's modernistic retail stores, which adopted large display windows and spacious interiors filled with marble, mirrors and chrome detailing.[153]

The factory buildings at East Tilbury were also emblematic of this apparent fusion of health and technology. Tomas maintained his factories were 'full of light, sunshine, fresh air […] all services such as power, water, steam and sewage underground.' As with industrial welfare, such attention to working environments was believed to improve efficiency and pay for itself.[154] The office and factory buildings at East Tilbury were built on the most up-to-date-lines, it was claimed; for example, they were designed so no 'awkward corners' would prevent thorough cleaning.[155] As can be seen in Images 4.17, 4.18 and 4.19, these modernistic buildings used eight-foot Crittall sash windows, high ceilings and artificial lighting to flood the working environment with light and air, while the open-plan interiors were spacious and versatile. The company praised them as 'England's most modern shoe factories' fitted with 'high speed,

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[151] *Bata Record* (8, 27 June, July, 12 October 1934, 12 April 1935); TUC, British Bata Dispute, 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3).
[152] *Bata Record* (26 October 1934, 15 February, 12 April 1935); Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 88-89; Rumsey, *Bata Factory*.
[153] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 76; Pavitt, 'The Bata Project', 36.
[154] Devinat, 'Bata System', 177-79; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 262-67.
[155] Rumsey, *Bata Factory*.

wonderfully constructed machines.'[156] The architectural press, too, were infused with a sense of mass-produced modernity. The buildings were constructed using a standardised system of steel frames and reinforced concrete that utilised assembly line construction methods. They were probably the first buildings in Britain to use electric welding, meaning no rivets or bolts were needed – saving 11% in the weight of material needed. The system also allowed the company to build significantly quicker: in just 21 days the first factory was erected and fabricated, and the British press subsequently applauded the speed, efficiency and versatility of its construction. Unlike Silver End, East Tilbury received far fewer architectural appraisals, but it was commended for these buildings, which were thought to signal the future of large-scale efficient construction in a country with very few high-rise buildings.[157]

[156] *Bata Record* (8 February 1935).
[157] *Builder* (25 May 1933); *Building* (May 1933); Jenkins, 'Utopia, Inc', 65-66; Smith, 'Bata Estate', 58.

Image 4.17: Secretary Connie Standon typing in one of the office buildings. The image demonstrates how modernistic designs emphasised light and space. Images 4.18 and 4.19 (below): The Bata factory complex at East Tilbury, taken in 1943 (Ludwig Jindra personal collection)

Technological Utopianism and the Reimagining of Capitalism

When Henry Ford claimed, in 1916, that 'history is more or less bunk […] we don't want tradition. We want to live in the present', he also channelled a belief later shared by modern architects and technological utopians. For Ford, history was the study of men and was therefore at odds with modernity characterised by technology, commerce and mass consumption. The revolutionary changes he pioneered in production were one segment of a philosophy also championing high wages and mechanisation in order to establish a consumer society: a 'new world, a new heaven, a new earth', as he put it.[158] Tomas Bata's technological idealism, informed by Ford, Frederick Taylor and the American efficiency movement, was also intimately linked to a rose-tinted vision of capitalism. He claimed in his autobiography (published cheaply in East Tilbury from 1934 and reproduced in the *Bata Record*) that the power of mechanised mass production led to an epiphany: where he once saw capitalists as 'black hearted' and machines 'making slaves out of workmen', he was enlightened on a journey through the USA, Britain and Germany, where he claimed people owned 'great stores of all the necessities of life […] an excess of the people's needs.'[159] Tomas subsequently lauded technology as a vehicle for reshaping capitalism. 'Robots release the greatest power of man – the powers of the human mind', he told the president of Czechoslovakia. In numerous speeches and articles, he extolled the virtues of modern production whose 'mechanical slaves […] [are] able to free humanity from drudgery and make people wealthy.'[160] Through the use of Fordist methods of production, his firm's output multiplied, efficiency improved, wages rose and costs fell.[161] Such was his belief in technology that he told the Czechoslovak Federal

[158] Quoted in Grandin, *Fordlandia*, 40-58, 73.
[159] Bata, *How I Began*, 22-28; Kasper and Kasperova, 'Bata Company in Zlín', 322-25.
[160] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, VI, 61-79, 150-51.
[161] Devinat, 'Bata System', 49-56.

Assembly 'a telephone would turn even an illiterate savage into a businessman.'[162] For Tomas and Jan Bata, technological utopianism was not an abstract concept but a vehicle for liberating humanity from want and ignorance.

The Batas' teleological worldview did not end with production, however. For a man who idolised Thomas Edison (he stopped production in Zlín upon hearing of his death in 1931), Bata passionately embraced new forms of transportation and communication. He would listen carefully to inventors, generously finance the company's laboratories and shaped the curricula in his schools around scientific subjects.[163] This zeal was transported to Britain, where in the first edition of *Bata Record* the company declared war on poverty through science and modern production methods. The firm encouraged workers to think of new ways of solving work problems with technology, and Jan speeches were printed in which he championed the power of modern machinery to generate universal opulence. The editor, Arthur Bartram Savage, declared machines had enabled the employment of 'everyone' even those previously 'a drag on human society.'[164] Details of the latest aeroplanes were published, alongside technological installations such as 'automaticket machines' at the East Tilbury canteen.[165] This unshakeable faith also affected labour management, as discussed in chapter two. The rigorous hiring process, which included intelligence, health and 'psychotechnical' (physical and psychological) tests used to help 'scientifically' place workers in their most efficient role, was believed to help shape a new, disciplined and efficient 'industrial man' for the machine age, and therefore scientifically condition society.[166] British employees were told that just as machines needed 'a

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[162] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 150-51.
[163] Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 50-51, 311-14; Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 3.
[164] *Bata Record* (25 May, 6, 22 June 1934, 11 January 1935).
[165] *Ibid* (June 1934).
[166] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 117-18; Kasper and Kasperova, 'Bata Company in Zlín', 336-47; Martin Marek and Vit Strobach, 'Identity, Discipline and Order', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 51-58.

general overhaul and repair, it is no less essential that a man should be scientifically examined and put right from time to time.'[167] Technocratic social engineering continued via the monitoring of employees outside the workplace (see chapter four). Technological utopianism was a cornerstone of the company's thinking: society could seemingly be planned and managed, just like the production of Bata shoes.

Less high-minded than Tomas and Jan, the Crittall family also shared a faith that technology promised greater efficiency, mass consumption and physical liberation. The development of standardised and interchangeable parts, new machinery and rationalised workflows continued after the war with the application of scientific breakthroughs and the further division of labour. Between 1925 and 1930, the number of CMC employees doubled and the amount of mechanical power used per employee tripled, resulting in greater output and reduced production costs. Through the adoption of 'every conceivable labour-saving device in the country,' Valentine Crittall declared the CMC 'the best technical and commercial organisation' of its size in Britain.[168] Aware that future prosperity depended upon embracing and pioneering new technologies, it opened a laboratory in 1926 and expanded its research department in 1929.[169] This allowed the firm to pioneer zinc rust proofing and develop new products such as skylight windows. In the 1930s, automatic electric welding was thought to have reduced the manufacturing costs of standard windows by 10%, while automatic presses, pneumatic riveting machines and the hot-dip galvanising further improved production.[170] At Silver End, automatic furnaces and drilling machines allowed semi- and unskilled workers to produce window fittings significantly quicker: in 1929, the factory turned out 700 billets an hour and handle pins every

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[167] *Bata Record* (1 June 1934).
[168] *Crittall Magazine* (January 1926); *Daily Mail* (18 December 1930); Blake, *Window Vision*, 72.
[169] *Crittall Magazine* (November 1926); CMC, Board Minutes (August 1929).
[170] CMC, Board Minutes (February 1929); Blake, *Window Vision*, 45, 73-81.

7 minutes.[171] White-collar positions were not free from this efficiency drive either, and the CMC also purchased typewriters, 'book-keeping machines' and 'calculating machines', and also claimed to have one of the largest fleets of vehicles in the country. It even planned to develop a motorised dental clinic in 1927.[172]

The CMC used its extensive influence in north Essex to promote its technological utopianism, particularly to its employees. Workers were told to 'take pride in your machine' and were educated on the latest technological developments via the works' magazine and, later, the *Braintree and Witham Times*. Evening classes, introduced in 1925, also focused on technical and scientific subjects. At Silver End, regular lectures were held on scientific and psychological topics and residents were advised on what scientific literature to read.[173] The firm joined the National Institute of Industrial Psychology in 1926 and from 1930 introduced neo-Taylorite practices, discussed in chapter five.[174] *The Crittall Magazine* published articles by visitors praising its 'world of new machines', which concluded science was the source of human 'progress.'[175] One employee wrote that the Crittall window was a 'wonder of science' akin to electricity, aeroplanes and motor vehicles. The letter sparked a host of tongue-in-cheek responses from readers calling for, among other things, the redevelopment of Stonehenge with Crittall windows and a letter dated 4029AD describing a shipment of windows to Mars.[176] These letters demonstrated the company's sense of being at the forefront of modernity, but also that its technological utopianism may have been widely parodied.

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[171] *Crittall Magazine* (February 1929).
[172] *Ibid* (July 1927); CMC, Board Minutes (December 1927, February, April 1929); SEDC, Board Minutes (January 1928).
[173] CMC, Notes on Operations (1916); *Crittall Magazine* (March 1925, March, July 1928).
[174] CMC, Board Minutes (January 1926); Fred Cook interviewed by Janet Gyford (15 April 1983, https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 5 March 2019).
[175] *Crittall Magazine* (September 1925, January, July 1927).
[176] *Ibid* (March 1929).

Like Ford, the Bata and Crittall families also believed efficient production could bring universal opulence to the consumer. Metal windows and cheap footwear were marketed as emancipating. The CMC claimed its windows were 'unquestionably superior' compared with its wooden rivals, which were judged to rattle, jam, warp, smell and poorly insulate. Steel windows were declared cheaper, stronger, fire-proof and offered 'absolute exclusion of weather, maximum admission of light and minimum cost of upkeep.'[177] Walter Crittall wrote that Crittall windows admitted 26% more light than wooden equivalents and were more versatile.[178] Adamant that the metal window would entirely replace its precursors, the CMC regularly attended the Ideal Home Exhibition and Crittall windows were usually featured in experimental homes of the future.[179] Shrewdly exploiting the campaign for national fitness, the firm pushed the idea its windows improved health by admitting more natural light. International purchasers praised them for being 'enlightening', 'graceful' and far-sighted, while the CMC marketed them as an affordable luxury and a status symbol.[180] As Image 4.20 suggests, the CMC liked to think of itself as providing a vital service to a public (and empire) yearning for new, technologically superior products. Printed just three months after the 1926 General Strike, it also hinted that working-class restlessness could be placated with greater consumerism.

[177] *Times* (7 September 1926); *Titbits* (12 March 1927); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 111-12.
[178] *Design for Today* (March 1934).
[179] CMC, Board Minutes (October 1925, April, November 1927).
[180] *Crittall Magazine* (February, May 1925, July 1927, June 1928).

Image 4.20: A sketch from *The Crittall Magazine* (August 1926), likely drawn by Walter Crittall, that depicting 'universal' demand for universal casement windows

Tomas and Jan Bata, too, thought their worldview liberated the consumer. Believing that private enterprise was a public service, or that individual greed created public good, Bata adopted as its motto 'Our Customer – Our Master.' In *The Economist*, Bata published double-page advertisements boldly stating 'the world is short 1,000,000,000 pairs of shoes' and claiming its methods were raising the living standards of millions.[181] On numerous occasions, Bata told audiences that half the world was walking barefoot and his company's 'great task' was to provide affordable shoes for them. Protectionism, therefore, was attacked as the enemy of the poor: only global specialisation and unencumbered international trade could economically emancipate the world.[182] The company was not shy in pronouncing its achievements, too. It claimed in 1925 the average English woman owned two or three pairs of shoes, but largely thanks to Bata by 1935 she owned eight pairs.[183]

Unlike other utopian company-built settlements, which blended religious motivations with the material world, the philosophies behind East Tilbury and Silver End were secular. This, of course, was not a new phenomenon: as Greg Claeys points out, since the English Civil War 'what defined the modern political utopia was its secular character, its insistence on locating and promoting the good life in the here and now.'[184] Adam Smith and social dreamers after him shared a belief that utopia should be sought in the material world. Beveridge had little religious fervour and believed faith should play no official role in government, and William Margrie called for 'efficiency' to become 'the twentieth-century religion.'[185] By the twentieth century, when industrial paternalism assumed increasingly non-religious impetuses (even at

[181] *Economist* (8 December 1928, 22 July 1933).
[182] *Bata Record* (3 August 1934); Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 90-92; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 305.
[183] *Bata Record* (18 January 1935).
[184] Claeys, *Searching for Utopia*, 99.
[185] Margrie, *Capitalist's Utopia*, 5-12, 28; Galbraith, *Economics in Perspective*, 64; Harris, 'William Beveridge.' A belief shared by the likes of Robert Owen, Jeremy Bentham, and later idealists like James Buchanan.

Quaker firms), modernist architects and town planners epitomised this desacralisation of the physical environment. As Nikolaus Pevsner maintained, modernists were not just 'un-Gothic' but 'anti-Gothic', preferring to build with unambiguous steel and clear glass walls that celebrated science and technology while 'discouraging otherworldly speculation.' One of the movement's founding fathers, Antonio Sant'Elia, had forcefully argued the architect's job was not to build cathedrals but great centres of commerce and leisure.[186] In the modernist's city, the material displaced the spiritual.

Religion played little or no role in Tomas Bata's social dreaming. Having been raised in a pious household, he nominally described himself as a Catholic but rarely visited church and did not force religion on his children. This may be surprising, given religion was so often a source of social and cultural power for elites, but Bata's motivations for building Zlín were not religious and he rarely, if ever, mentioned Christianity in his speeches. Instead, Zlín was 'a secularised, work-centred, technologised and functionalised world of capitalism', as Annett Steinführer stated. The city was united through the 'modern church' of work, as Tomas put it, and British newspapers described the company's embrace of technology as the 'gospel of efficiency.'[187] The firm never built a church at East Tilbury, despite demand from residents, preferring to allow Catholic services in the small sports pavilion and, once built, Community House. Religious celebrations were also held in the latter, and while ambitious plans for the village before the Second World War included a small church, the firm was happy to direct residents to nearby St Catherine's (Anglican) and Linford Methodist Church, parish churches roughly one mile from the settlement.[188] This policy appears to have been adopted in Bata's colonies around the

[186] Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, 37, 210.
[187] *Guardian* (13 July 1932); Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 16; Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 38-39, 60.
[188] *Bata Record* (12 October 1934, 15 March 1935); Smith, *East Tilbury Appraisal*, 20-21.

world.[189] Even the military-like control it exerted at its 'Institute of Young Men' at East Tilbury, where boys' entire week was organised down to the hour, made church services optional and offered no alternative religious education.[190]

Like Bata, religion did not motivate the building of Silver End, although the family was more accommodating to residents' religious fulfilment. Francis Crittall had been raised in a 'tormenting' Congregational household and this atmosphere of 'religious overfeeding' generated 'a profound dislike for all organised forms of worship.' This 'persecution', he argued, merely 'developed a warped sense of honour' and repressed 'natural instincts and desires', including the invisible hand of private selfishness.[191] Walter Crittall, likewise, rarely attended church and did so 'very reluctantly.'[192] Not that the Crittalls did not support religion in the village. The company sold land and loaned £400 for the redevelopment of an unused seventeenth-century barn to create St Francis Church (Anglican). Opened in April 1930, the church delicately interwove the old and the modern: described by the Bishop of Chelmsford as a 'rainbow church', its thatched roof and dark wooden panelling was uplifted by modernistic features including bright internal decorations, pink Crittall doors and Crittall stained-glass windows.[193] Five months later, a small Congregational Church was also completed in the village. The land was sold at a discounted rate of £50 and Francis Crittall gifted £100 for its construction, which was done by the SEDC at a cost of £2,450 and repaid within two years.[194]

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[189] Elisabeth van Meer, 'Modernity on "Brabant's Heath": Building Batadorp in the Netherlands, 1932-59', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 176.
[190] *Bata Record* (8 March 1935).
[191] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 7-31.
[192] John Crittall interview with Thea Thompson (1974-77, British Library C707/518/1-2).
[193] SEDC, Board Minutes (April 1929); *Daily Mail* (26 April 1930); *Braintree and Witham Times* (24 October 1930).
[194] *Braintree and Witham Times* (7 March, 19 September 1930).

Local newspapers rarely mentioned the family attending services, and like Bata, the family did not reference Christianity in their writings or speeches.

The Crittall family, therefore, showed only moderate support for religious institutions at Silver End, and this secular social dreaming appears to have been shared by some employees at the firm. Workers wrote of their atheism in *The Crittall Magazine* and one even championed eugenics and birth control. The Silver End correspondent 'Long John' went even further, claiming religion had 'hampered mankind's advancement' and labelled scientists 'mystics of materialism.'[195] While these articles were met with condemnation by other employees, religious fervour was not overwhelming in the village. In the spirit of individual liberty and 'modernity', Francis and Ellen Crittall not only allowed sport and festivities on the Sabbath, but encouraged it by opening their large home and gardens, 'Manors', to the public.[196] While the village contained several thousand people by the early 1930s, the combined capacity of both churches was just 210 and there were complaints of small attendances and abandoned services. In the late 1920s, St Francis Church attracted attendances of only 30 to 50 people, but by 1935 accommodated as few as three worshippers.[197]

Modern architecture was seemingly the perfect embodiment of these secular, materialistic utopias. Despite some claims the modern movement was 'Bolshevik', in Britain it was undoubtedly a greater partner to capitalism than its opponents: this was the architecture of skyscrapers, factories and office blocks. From the 80,000 feet of glass used to create the Crystal Palace in 1851, an unrepentant celebration of free trade, entrepreneurialism and industrial

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[195] *Crittall Magazine* (February, March, April, July 1929).
[196] *Braintree and Witham Times* (7 July 1932). A Catholic church was built in the 1960s but had been planned in the 1920s.
[197] Eileen Fierheller, 'Silver End 1926-1940: Creation of a Community' (MA Thesis: University of Essex, 1978), 18, 31.

capitalism, to Fritz Lang's dystopian film *Metropolis* (1927) 76 years later – which depicted a modernistic city where unfettered capitalism had deindividualised and enslaved the working class – the machine aesthetic had long been identified with capitalism.[198] Some described the movement as a merger between industry, art and 'political economy', it being wedded to 'commerce' and mass production.[199] But modernism was associated not just with industrialism but modern capitalism. This is a point raised by several academics: notwithstanding the high-mindedness of some left-wing modernist architects, the movement was intimately tied to capitalism and supported its reproduction. Putting aside the fact architects were primarily paid by businesses or wealthy patrons, the nature of the profession fundamentally failed to (or could not) challenge the ownership of the means of production. Far-left critics highlighted this hypocrisy, arguing that architecture acted as a substitute for real socio-political change and even helped bolster the status quo, epitomised by Le Corbusier's slogan 'Architecture or Revolution!'[200] Indeed, most of the early patrons of modernism in Britain were aristocrats or businessmen.[201] As Nathaniel Coleman has maintained, modernism was primarily driven not by Marxism or socialism, but Taylorism and Fordism: it was a panacea for revolution.[202]

In the minds of Britain's leading architects and architectural critics, commercialisation was anathema to art. True beauty, it was popularly maintained, was not driven by price or popular demand. Commentators often compared the 'finer cities and finer buildings' of non-industrial countries with industrialised urban centres devoid of natural beauty and spoiled by

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[198] Martin Weiner, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981), 27-40.
[199] *Builder* (5 April 1935).
[200] Felicity Scott, 'On Architecture under Capitalism', *Grey Room* 6 (2002), 44-65.
[201] Powers, *Modern Movement*, 18-19.
[202] Nathaniel Coleman, 'Utopia and Modern Architecture?', *Architectural Research Quarterly* 14:4 (2012), 339-48. See also David Gartman, 'Why Modern Architecture Emerged in Europe, not America: The New Class and the Aesthetics of Technocracy', *Theory, Culture and Society* 17:5 (2000), 75-96.

advertising.[203] Claims of dehumanisation often echoed anti-capitalist criticisms. The editor of *Architects' Journal* pointedly stating in June 1927 that private enterprise – 'whether it is concerned with boots or with church windows' – did not care for beauty, quality or artistry but simply 'capturing a market.' The 'baseness of its motive' was 'inimical to craftsmanship.'[204] The argument that mass production created deskilling, commodity fetishism and alienation was, of course, not new, but these charges were often made specifically at modernistic architecture. In a similar vein to William Morris, Sir Edwin Lutyens argued Le Corbusier's philosophy was akin to selling a cheap product at Woolworths: devoid of individuality and species-essence.[205] Others repeated these lamentations about the loss of individuality, and warned the rise of featureless, replicable styles would create huge job losses at a time when unions warned mechanisation caused 'technological unemployment.'[206] This was a theme brilliantly mocked in Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), which also used a modernist factory to highlight the dehumanising impact of technology. At times, the rhetoric adopted by modernism's enemies was not just that of Ruskin or Morris, but of Marx. Commercial influences were described as undermining 'morals' and 'human relationships' by William Plume, the editor of *The Builder*. The resulting 'disillusionment' in production was 'dividing man from himself' and preventing craftsmen seeking their 'destiny', echoing Marxist theories of social alienation. Plume argued the 'theoretical utopia of a machine-run future' was not a fair price for abandoning the 'greatest delight' in life, 'making of some useful or decorative (or both) thing, with one's own hands.'[207]

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[203] *Architects' Journal* (29 July 1925).
[204] *Ibid* (1 June 1927).
[205] *Architect and Building News* (3 February 1928).
[206] *Builder* (10 September 1926); Engineering and Allied Employers National Federation, *Unemployment. Its Realities and Problems* (1933, MRC MSS.237/4/5/6).
[207] *Builder* (17 September 1926, 20 November 1931, 13 January 1933, 24 April 1936).

Thus, the fact that modern architecture was somewhat embraced by the commercial world and not in domestic architecture is unsurprising; in fact, it was the British public's interpretation of modernism as the aesthetic of big business that restricted its success. This point has been made by the likes of Ian Bentley and Daniel Miller, who have placed modernism in interwar Britain within the framework of fetishized consumerism.[208] As domestic space was often seen as a tranquil escape from the competitive 'public' realm, homeowners showed little appetite to bring the industrial aesthetic into their inner sanctums. In a world increasingly governed by scientific advancements, a yearning for a romanticised vision of the past was overwhelming. Function was a poor substitute for humanity, and it is no wonder that leading proponents of modernism in Britain, like British Bata and the CMC, were those seeking to perfect capitalism.

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Technological and technocratic utopianism was embodied in the modernism used at Silver End and East Tilbury. They rejected vernacular pre-industrial architecture for supposedly more efficient, cheaper and superior flat-roofed cubist houses. As the only two working-class estates in interwar Britain built using the machine aesthetic, they are testament to an unrealised vision of the future. Modernism's critics echoed anti-capitalist objections: its impersonal search for efficiency and higher profits, its destruction of the past and mutilation of the natural world, its replacing of skilled craftwork, its suppression of human creativity and its social alienation. For its champions it promised to create good-quality housing speedily and cheaply, raise living standards, increase profits and put the needs of residents (function) before the gaze of the

[208] Ian Bentley, 'Arcadia becomes Dunroamin': suburban growth and the roots of opposition' in Paul Oliver, Ian Davis and Ian Bentley (eds.), *Dunroamin': The Suburban Semi and Its Enemies* (Pimlico, 1994); Daniel Miller, 'Modernism and Suburbia as Material Ideology' in Daniel Miller and Christopher Tilley (eds.), *Ideology, Power and Prehistory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), 37-50.

public (form). These garden 'cities' fused ambitions to live in a pastoral arcadia with an embrace of the 'modern', seeking to provide the best of both worlds. They took the longing for space, privacy and comfort, and injected it with a philosophy of unfettered, technocratic liberal capitalism. Like the garden city movement, modernism also promised to liberate humanity from toil, but unlike the democratic socialism of Ebenezer Howard, Bata and Crittall appropriated the form to establish privatised, monopolistic, undemocratic and materialistic worlds.

As Europe once again headed towards war, and with it the dystopian consequences of applied scientific knowledge, Jan Bata's technological utopianism only intensified. By this time, as his nephew Thomas wrote, he had developed 'some worrisome personality quirks' that 'bordered on megalomania.'[209] Jan proposed his own solution to Europe's problems in 1937 loosely based on a fusion between Fascist Italy and Zlín. In it, Jan called for nationalism to be replaced by a corporate consciousness: for companies to establish sovereignty over 'ideal cities', in which welfare capitalism would dominate and workers would exchange high wages and security for total obedience.[210] Two years later he advocated a similar scheme based on a network of new utopian company villages. Organised technocratically and meritocratically, these would be architecturally uniform and homogenous communities where social conformity was rigidly enforced.[211] Jan Bata's technocratic, authoritarian and naïve ambitions were ultimately a universalised version of the capitalist utopianism attempted in Zlín and Bata's dozens of corporate colonies. As Britain struggled to overcome the crisis of capitalism in the early 1930s, Silver End and East Tilbury were presented as an achievable alternative. For some, especially

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[209] Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 142.
[210] Zachary Doleshal, 'Imagining Bata in the World of Tomorrow: the 1939-1940 New York World's Fair', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 65-77.
[211] Ševeček, 'Company Towns', in *ibid*, 38-44.

their founders, this was undoubtedly a picture of what Britain would look like in the future: a series of dream-like, technologically advanced company towns. In them, the visible hand of bureaucratic corporate governance would direct almost every aspect of daily life in pursuit of universal opulence: a world of mass consumption where all were free of want, wealth flowed endlessly from machines and company profits soared.

Chapter Four – Enmeshed in the Company Machine: Forging Corporate Consciousness

'There was once a time when the normal attitude of a factory employee was to regard his work, bitterly or philosophically, as a necessary evil', so went the *Bata Record* editorial column on 26 June 1936, 'as soon as the hooter blew, maybe a little sooner, all thoughts of the firm were banished from his mind.' Such an attitude, one matched by employers, meant the worker 'grew painfully conscious of the class system and it penetrated his mind, dimly or savagely', the editor, Arthur Bartram Savage, told wage earners at East Tilbury: 'they were capital; he was labour.' The article chimed with the banality of other messages in Bata's supposedly realised 'new order.' Workers, the magazine was fond of repeating, 'must learn what it is like to be capital.'[1] The firm's commitment to shared prosperity meant that being working class in the company's 'colony' was thought of as a transitory state (or state of mind), quickly transcended with enough elbow grease. Bata's supposed 'profit-sharing' system apparently meant all employees, from the 14-year-old Thurrock girl who filled boxes on a conveyor belt, to the middle-aged millionaire director, were fellow 'collaborators' and 'sharemen.' This, indeed, was a point strongly made by managing director Jan Bata when he was visiting the village in October 1935. His ambition was 'to make every worker a capitalist, allowing him to make as much money as he can wisely manage.'[2] Regardless of whether a Bataman walked to East Tilbury from a slum, drove from university or flew by jet, all had equal opportunity to progress and prosper.[3]

Tomas Bata died before his vision of an East Tilbury metropolis had truly started, but the philosophy promoted in the village was born from his capitalist utopianism. 'The basis of my

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[1] *Bata Record* (26 June 1936).
[2] *Ibid* (18 October 1935).
[3] *Ibid* (1 October 1937).; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 347-57.

entrepreneurial work is to turn my employees into capitalists', Tomas declared in 1924. This was his 'new foundation' for society and ensured workers 'feel as if they were themselves the owners.' His speeches and articles, regularly repeated in the *Bata Record*, disingenuously stressed his 'duty to liberate our collaborators from being slaves to capital' and make them 'masters of capital.'[4] Private enterprise, his half-brother Jan explained at East Tilbury, was a 'living organism' built on a community bound by 'collaboration in economic life.' As such, employers must assume power and responsibility, 'unifying and harmonising' society in a state of natural order. Failure to integrate, he pointedly warned his employees, would create a 'spirit of animosity' and lead to mutual destruction.[5]

The Crittall family were less grandiose in their political aims but shared the desire to comprehensively enmesh their workforce into the financial fate of the company and supposedly create 'minor capitalists' of their workers. Like Tomas and Jan, Francis Crittall sought a 'middle way between capital and labour' through a host of policies engineered to allow wage earners to profit from the success of the company and its commercial ventures, including Silver End. These schemes aimed to turn workers into 'shareholder employees.'[6] Convinced the development of the village could be self-financed by recirculating wages, he gave his employees multiple opportunities to voluntarily invest and become 'financially interested' in its success. The board believed this mutual financial interest in the Crittall Manufacturing Company (CMC) and Silver End Development Company (SEDC) would encourage zest in the factory, loyalty to its village stores and pride in the corporate

[4] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 49-50, 201-17, 215-16.
[5] *Bata Record* (January-February 1935).
[6] CMC, Board Minutes (July 1925); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 170.

community.[7] While investors were promised monetary benefits from these policies, it also encouraged an entrepreneurial mindset that guaranteed, as *The Crittall Magazine* put it, 'money is allowed to circulate freely inside the village. This is our own business, run by ourselves.' There was no better way of investing a small amount each week, Valentine Crittall announced when cutting the first sod at Silver End, than claiming a financial stake in your employer's success. In doing so, the workforce would be elevated socially, morally and materially: as one member of staff put it, it was 'a much better investment than the bookies.'[8] Under these various schemes and methods of enmeshment, capital and labour would be intimately bound to each other: the interests of owners, managers, foremen and workers, plus their families, were unified. By extension, it also meant continued support for private enterprise.

These were lofty ambitions, but how would new communities of several thousand people be persuaded by such a grand philosophy? This worldview would be very difficult to promote among the British working class in normal circumstances, but fostering a feeling of collective unity, belonging and identity – let alone a philosophy so brazenly at odds with notions of working-class solidarity immediately after the General Strike (in the case of Silver End) and during the Great Depression (East Tilbury) – was even more challenging. But these new utopian settlements offered industrialists seeking to revitalise capitalism a fresh start, especially given the makeup of residents. East Tilbury and Silver End were melting pots of different nationalities, ethnicities and cultures, with seemingly little binding residents together except that, firstly, the settlements were overwhelmingly working class, and, secondly, worked for the

[7] *Crittall Magazine* (January 1926); Crittall Employees' Benefit Fund, Board Minutes (January 1928, Braintree Museum (BM)).
[8] *Crittall Magazine* (December 1925, June 1926).

same firm. At Silver End, residents initially came from rural areas of north Essex and nearby towns and cities, including London, but were later joined by young families from South Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the Midlands and northern England. Legend has it men walked for hundreds of miles in search of work and accommodation.[9] Kinship networks, the 'traditional' basis of working-class communities, were non-existent.[10] East Tilbury, too, was 'racially mixed', as *Industrial Welfare* put it.[11] Although most residents were from south Essex, many also came from other 'depressed areas' as they responded to advertisements placed nationally for unskilled workers. It was also said worker-residents walked or cycled to the village from as far as Northumbria, and possibly one in ten was Czechoslovakian (usually men staying a short while in Community House).[12] These villages were a beacon for those with empty pockets and stomachs.

The thread that attempted to unify these diverse communities was a socially engineered corporate consciousness that attempted to propagate, indoctrinate and internalise a philosophy of capitalist utopianism. Like class consciousness, it took the organisation of production as its starting point for generating a collective sense of belonging and shared interests, but made these bonds vertical, not horizontal. While class differences were inscribed into the landscape of these villages, class was taught to be understood as fluid and temporary and, therefore, not possessing a permanency requiring a consciousness. For the socially mobile Bata Crittall families, who did not publicly identify with members of their own class, this also meant a conspicuous lack of bourgeois class unity too. Just as capitalism had allowed them to

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[9] *Ibid* (December 1927); King, *Guv'nor's Village*.
[10] For example, Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (Routledge, 1957).
[11] Quoted in *Bata Record* (12 August 1936).
[12] Thurrock Juvenile Unemployment Committee, Minutes 1925-1939 (Essex Record Office (ERO), Chelmsford, D/Z 59/1); British Bata, Staff Register 1933-1952 (Bata Heritage Centre (BHC), East Tilbury).

flourish, they claimed to want universal opulence for their employees. Of course, a sense of corporate identity was felt beyond the walls of utopian company settlements, but it was in these villages that it was trialled most extensively. It was here that welfare capitalism and vertical integration reached their zenith, and where a 'bourgeois' suburban value-system of individualistic and materialistic living met the collectivism of corporate consciousness-raising. Unlike suburbia, where the wealthy were sheltered from the poor, East Tilbury and Silver End were socially mixed settlements designed to reflect, and perfect, a class-riddled society.

The villages were also intended to correct the biggest criticism of new municipal estates: that they lacked a sense of community. Vast class-segregated estates like Becontree received intense public criticism for failing to generate an 'estate consciousness', and though these criticisms were politically motivated there was no denying that poorly funded councils failed to adequately provide community and social services between the wars. At Becontree, for example, there was a dearth of shops, libraries, pubs, churches, schools, parks, doctors and hospitals. Between the wars only 2% of tenants on large municipal estates had access to a community centre. Coupled with the misplaced fear that falling working hours was resulting in a 'problem of leisure' in working-class communities, the failure to provide centres for 'civic patriotism' was keenly felt, especially among the middle class. Both the political left and right embraced the notion that the 'ideal' conditions for communities were found in the English village, where social interaction between classes fostered an unselfish citizenship. The concept of mixed-class 'neighbourhood units' of 6,000 to 8,000 people would occupy planners' conception of community for decades to come. Silver End and East Tilbury did not suffer such

criticism; in adopting the purest form of planners' idealism, the self-contained garden 'city', they presented an idealised way of living seemingly made possible only by private enterprise.[13]

While urban planning was essential, the foundations for corporate consciousness was a strong financial and social interdependence between workers, management and capitalists that went beyond typical paternalistic labour relations. In doing so, British Bata and the CMC hoped to endow worker-residents with a corporate identity formed from an intense loyalty to the company 'family' and a strong sense of pride and trust in the firm. For this collective identity to be fully realised, it was juxtaposed with a sense of otherness. At East Tilbury in particular, enemies of the organisation were found in left-wing political agitators and institutions thought to want to expose the different interests of employer and employee, and internally in those who sought to limit this sense of enforced unity. Business leaders, in this capacity, fostered a cult-like following by presenting themselves as benevolent patriarchs. The villages were designed so that residents felt a deep sense of belonging and played an active part in the community: they were not merely wage earners or villagers but company men and women.

The 'utopian' settlements were engineered not just to achieve 'spontaneous' consent for the company and corporate community, but a 'spontaneous' ardour for an idealised capitalism. Like at nearby Fordson Estate, where agricultural labourers were forcibly 'enmesh[ed]' into profit-sharing schemes at the 'conservative utopia', such measures were believed to weaken class consciousness and promote an 'enterprise consciousness', consequently fostering enthusiasm for capitalism.[14] Through fully enmeshing worker-residents in the corporate mechanisms of everyday life – not only in employment and accommodation, but also financial,

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[13] Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 44, 59-77, 94-96; Olechnowicz, *Becontree Estate*, 2-9, 16-28, 74-89, 139-179. On the 'problem of leisure' see for example, Henry Durant, *The Problem of Leisure* (Routledge, 1938).
[14] Kowol, 'Conservative Modernity', 794-98.

educational, political and cultural apparatuses – the communities were meant to share all interests with their employer, and its philosophy. 'This is the task we have set ourselves,' as *Bata Record* editor Bartram Savage put it, 'to foster loyalty in many little ways.'[15] Corporate consciousness went beyond paternalism and was designed to endow employees and their families with a competitive, self-improving and materialistic mindset that encouraged entrepreneurialism *within* the company. Through control of nearly every ideological apparatus of everyday life, the companies intended worker-residents to became wholly dependent on them and champion their utopianism. Wage workers were meant to think of themselves as capitalists and therefore enthusiastically support the continued functioning, success and extension of capitalism. Individualism was also promoted but in a highly prescribed way. Materially driven or materialistic behaviour was urged in 'private' life, as well as 'rational' recreations, but competitiveness was encouraged in the workplace. This attitude was summarised by Tomas Bata, who wished for residents to 'work collectively and live individually.'[16] As such, there was no clear separation between 'public' and 'private' space. As nearly all private property was owned by the companies and nearly every activity and institution under their direction, worker-residents were submerged into the company brand.

East Tilbury and Silver End were, of course, not the only places in Britain where workers were thoroughly enmeshed into the corporate machine, but it was in these villages that this entanglement was most exhaustive. Cash bonuses and 'profit-sharing' were used at Port Sunlight after the First World War, for example.[17] In the mid-1920s, rising Conservative MPs like Harold Macmillan promoted voluntary profit-sharing as a means of staving off socialism

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[15] *Bata Record* (6 April 1935).
[16] Smith, 'Bata Estate', 52.
[17] William Lever, *The Six Hour Day and Other Industrial Questions* (New York: Henry Holt, 1918); Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare*, 127.

and state intervention, and both the Liberal and Conservative manifestos also adopted it in principle.[18] Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin also promoted the benefits of creating 'capitalist individualists' through voluntary profit sharing.[19] The concept was praised by right-wing journalists and the likes of the Economic League as a means of fostering support for capitalism among the working class.[20] However, as Robert Fitzgerald has noted, employers used dozens of diverse schemes to financially incentivise workers between the wars – from wage bonuses to cost reductions – and these were often labelled 'profit-sharing' even if no profits or shares were directly issued to employees.[21] This was also the case at East Tilbury and Silver End, where the term 'profit-sharing' was often erroneously used to collectively describe a variety of bonus and incentive schemes (discussed below). The idea of creating self-financing colonies where residents owned shares in the governing corporation was not entirely alien to the left either, having emerged as a concept in James Silk Buckingham's *National Evils and Practical Remedies* (1849), which inspired Ebenezer Howard.[22] 'Co-partnership', a form of profit-sharing that granted employees a small number of shares without the full voting rights of ordinary shareholders, had also developed out of the labour movement but was later embraced by industrialists keen on creating 'minor capitalists' of their workers. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Labour Co-partnership Association argued such measures could teach workers about capitalist economics and generate an aspirational, consumerist worldview, as an antidote to the threats of nationalisation, socialism and co-operation. Later in the period the idea was associated with the political right. In 1927 Alfred Mond, tasked with resolving

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[18] House of Commons 161:2473-2512 (20 March 1923); 309:2216-2278 (11 March 1936); Harold Macmillan *et al.*, *Industry and the State: A Conservative View* (Macmillan, 1927); Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare*, 202.
[19] Kowol, 'Conservative Modernity', 783.
[20] Withers, *Case for Capitalism,* 249-55; McIvor, '"A Crusade for Capitalism"', 641.
[21] Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare*, 199-203.
[22] Alan March, 'Democratic dilemmas, planning and Ebenezer Howard's garden city', *Planning Perspectives* 19:4 (2004), 421.

industrial relations after the General Strike, wrote this would create a 'new psychology' whereby wage earners thought themselves 'co-workers' in business.[23] Unionist MP Noel Skelton, who coined the term 'property-owning democracy' in 1923, believed 'profit-sharing', smallholdings and homeownership were the means capitalism would regain its popular appeal after the war, and these ideas were popularised within the Conservative Party in the 1930s.[24] But despite encouragement from successive governments, genuine profit-sharing was never widespread in Britain, unlike in the USA.[25] In 1920, 250,000 employees were involved in profit-sharing or co-partnership schemes, but employers generally preferred financing welfare schemes.[26] For the Batas and Crittalls, who took inspiration from across the Atlantic, financial enmeshment was the logical extension of vertical integration. If these companies owned the supply, production and distribution of their products, then why not take ownership of their employees' finances, too?

The impact of this philosophy provides one reason for the continued support for liberal capitalism in Britain between the wars. In exchange for the promise of good wages, social mobility, job security, welfare and healthcare, healthy rural environments with modern homes and the trappings of a middle-class lifestyle, British Bata and the CMC hoped to establish communities of working-class 'minor capitalists'. As Victor Schmidt, managing director of British Bata, told the *Sunday Dispatch* in 1936, 'we want all our workers to share in the profits of the firm. We want them to live on the site, shop on the site and entertain themselves here.'[27] The companies received the promise of undisturbed production, greater efficiency and limited

[23] Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare,* 198-203; Jones, 'Employers' Welfare Schemes', 69.
[24] Ortolano, *Thatcher's Progress*, 222-24, 250-51.
[25] Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, 104.
[26] Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare,* 45, 69-71, 100, 198.
[27] Quoted in *Bata Record* (12 August 1936).

labour turnover from a loyal and enthusiastic workforce that pumped wages almost instantly back into the company. Tomas Bata once wrote that 'it does not just depend on hoes to get a good crop of potatoes, but on newspapers, printing presses and posters.'[28] This neatly summarises the outline of the current chapter, which explores how workers and residents were comprehensively enmeshed into the corporate machine through financial, cultural, ideological and political means. It will outline how these model corporatocracies tried to establish a hegemony that bolstered capitalism and certified its 'common sense' by consecrating it with utopian reverence.

Financial Enmeshment

For millions of workers between the wars, financial attachments to their employer had extended beyond the weekly wage to encompass a variety of welfare arrangements. As discussed in chapter two, welfare capitalism was thought to pay for itself, not only because schemes were contributory (although boosted by employer contributions), but because cultivating the health, security and happiness of employees promised to improve profits. In doing so, the economic bond between employee and employer was significantly strengthened, and consequently the claim that capitalism was mutually beneficial and 'natural' was equally strengthened. Silver End and East Tilbury were designed as the ultimate expression of this financial enmeshment.

Not only did wages financially tie worker-residents to employers, but also rents, restaurants, 'public' transport, groceries and general provisions. Rent, for example, was just one of several reductions made automatically from wages each week, and in Silver End this also included

[28] *Ibid* (12 July 1935).

company-supplied electricity and water charges. The SEDC even managed its own fleet of public buses.[29] These were not the only charges taken immediately from weekly wages. Silver Enders were automatically incorporated into the firm's benevolent fund and a further 2*d* was taken from hospital and sickness fund subscribers, which was matched by the firm. A full-time company doctor was located in the village in 1927 and was joined in 1930 by a profit-making company dentist, who also used one of the larger houses as a surgery. Both insurances were designed to cover families as well as employees, so Silver End residents were included in this corporate welfare, too.[30] Another 2*d* was taken for membership to the Silver End sports section.[31] In 1937 a contributory pension and life assurance scheme (also available for women) was also introduced, designed to reward white-collar workers for long service.[32] It is unlikely, too, that these policies were genuinely voluntary. Male staff were 'expected' to join the pension scheme and in June 1943 all workers were automatically enrolled onto Crittall healthcare insurance and could only opt out by completing a 'special form.'[33] Jim White – whose father and four siblings all worked at the firm – joined as a paint boy aged 14 in 1929 and remembered little choice in the matter: 'when I got to a certain age they made me pay. I paid 7*s* and 6*d* out of my £3 […] we all had to pay.'[34]

The welfare enmeshment of British Bata workers was even more extensive, and coercive. Just after starting production in early 1934 the company established a hospital savings association, which was automatically withdrawn from wages each week. This also included dental cover

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[29] SEDC, Rent Book for 75 Valentine Way (1928, Silver End Heritage Society (SEHS)); *Silver End Monthly* (February-March 1929).
[30] *Crittall Magazine* (July 1926, March 1927); SEDC, Board Minutes (October 1927); CMC, Board Minutes (April-May 1930).
[31] *Crittall Magazine* (June 1927).
[32] CMC, *Crittall Staff Pension Scheme* (1937, (BM)).
[33] CMC, *Staff Pension Scheme* (1937); Crittall Hospital and Sickness Funds (1943, BM).
[34] Jim White interviewed by Janet Gyford (13 December 1991, https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 1 November 2019).

and insured the families of employees. Although a doctor's surgery was not built in East Tilbury until 1947, the firm introduced other welfare measures including a 45-hour five-day week (1934), which was reduced to 42.5 hours two years later.[35] 'Minimum paid' holidays were introduced in 1934 – including the chance to take a subsidised trip to Zlín, which was used as propaganda in the *Bata Record* – and full or average pay from 1936 (two years before the Holidays with Pay Act cemented this nationally).[36] In June 1937 'a comprehensive welfare scheme' was launched that included sick pay, a marriage endowment for girls, and a pension scheme for men and older women. Like the CMC, the scheme was contributory, with a single payment taken automatically from wages, but the firm supplemented payments. A penny a week was also levied for voluntary membership to the sports and social club.[37] Financial contributions from workers were essential, as this encouraged a spirit of self-help but simultaneously meant workers were dependent on the company, not only for job security but the health and wellbeing of their families. On the surface, these provisions were mutually beneficial: it was simply 'common sense' to join. Through these numerous and overlapping welfare mechanisms, Silver End and East Tilbury became miniature, privatised welfare states at a time when successive British governments were scrambling to prevent further welfare spending.

After wage reductions there was the question of spending. At Silver End, the 'universal store' turned over between £800 and £1,100 every week, providing every daily need, including fruit, vegetables, honey, eggs and meat produced on the company farms. Not all products were produced was by the firm, however, and consumers could also purchase anything from

[35] *Bata Record* (1 June, 30 November 1934, 6 December 1935, 31 July 1936); Smith, *East Tilbury Appraisal*, 39.
[36] *Bata Record* (20 July 1934, 24 July 1936).
[37] *Ibid* (15 June 1934, 7 May, 11 June 1937).

gramophones and pianos to boots, pharmaceuticals, tailored clothing and cigarettes. After April 1930 sales were also available on credit. Adverts for the department stores emphasised that it was 'your own firm's stores' and workers should 'support your own firm.'[38] At East Tilbury, Bata built a 'provision' shop and Bata shoe store, alongside a grocer, butchers, newsagents and snack bar, also with the intention of becoming an 'entirely self-sufficient model colony.' By 1937, not long after Community House was finished, the social department estimated restaurant, canteen and shop sales amounted to 10,000 cigarettes, 800lbs of meat, 600lbs of bread, 1500lbs of potatoes, 150lbs of tinned fruit, 300 bottles of milk and 12,180 cups of teas each week, some of which was produced on the company farms. Both villages also had a company barber, hairdressers and a post office.[39]

A similar principle applied to the canteens. A profit-making canteen was temporarily built at Silver End during construction, after which a permanent one for male workers and a restaurant for management were constructed in the village hall. By 1929, nearly every employee at Silver End used the canteen at lunch, which, like at East Tilbury, sold products from the company farms.[40] British Bata even engineered lunches to improve efficiency: manual workers received plenty of meat and white-collar workers ate little, because it was thought to better their output. A canteen at East Tilbury was built in 1934 and enlarged in 1935 and again in 1936, latterly placed in Community House. Breakfast, lunch and dinner menus were published every week in the *Bata Record* and the editor strongly encouraged workers to dine there, claiming it was 'sheer foolishness' to bring packed lunches when the canteen provided cheap, healthy

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[38] *Silver End Monthly* (February-March 1929); CMC, Board Minutes (April 1930); *Braintree and Witham Times* (7 February, 5 September 1930).
[39] *Braintree and Witham Times* (28 March 1930); *Bata Record* (4 September 1936, 11 June, 9 September, 22 October 1937).
[40] CMC, Board Minutes (June 1926); SEDC, Board Minutes (March 1929).

meals.[41] With the nearest set of shops between four and six miles from both communities, there was little reason to leave the garden villages, or spend money elsewhere.

This financial enmeshment went much further than welfare and consumption, however. Both companies sought, firstly, to tightly wed workers to the firm, but secondly to generate a philosophical and ideological change in their mental outlook. For Tomas Bata, the primary means of achieving this was via a unique system of workshop 'autonomy' and 'profit-sharing'. The system, developed in Czechoslovakia in 1923 and 1924, divided the whole international organisation into nominally autonomous workshops, each with a single specialised function (for example, the leather factory, rubber factory, retail department). Each workshop or department was supposedly meant to operate as a private enterprise, with its their own managing director, budgets and forecasts. Each workshop would purchase their materials from other Bata departments in the supply chain, and sell their products to the next workshop for a profit. In reality, each workshop was neither autonomous nor operated as its own business, as prices, targets, the supply chain and production processes were all managed centrally. Efficient departments provided collective cash bonuses, giving the illusion that workers owned 'shares' in their 'autonomous' workshop and were receiving a dividend from its alleged profits. For department heads, foremen and retail managers this was their major source of income as fixed weekly wages were little higher than an unskilled operative.[42] By the time British Bata began operating at East Tilbury, the system had been established for a decade and was extended to conveyor belt operatives, and was extolled by the *Bata Record* editor as a 'mutual voluntary agreement' designed to stimulate production and encourage efficiency. It supposedly meant collective reward or ruin, and gave individual workers an added incentive to share in their

[41] *Bata Record* (25 May 1934, 6 November 1936, 19 November 1937).
[42] Devinat, 'Bata System', 172-74; Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 56-58; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 174-180.

department's success. For clerical departments that could not 'share' in 'profits', or as a reward for 'loyalty' and 'efficient work', each week British Bata directors arbitrarily issued 'premiums' to several employees which were published in the works magazine. 'In his rising share of profit every worker can see the success of his own toil', Bartram Savage wrote, 'and he is therefore directly interested in everything that can lead to higher profits in his department and to higher rewards for himself.'[43]

A second and complimentary 'profit-sharing' scheme was also used by Bata for all wage earners. A proportion of workers' wages were compulsorily withheld each week and 'banked' with the firm, and their balance was then issued 10% annual interest. This separate scheme was intended to incentivise loyalty, financial responsibility and a keen interest in the company. Using the language of 'profit-sharing', Schmidt claimed it made workers 'a part owner in the business', although it came with no democratic control and workers could only withdraw funds on 'special occasions' and only up to a certain limit. In practice, however, nearly half of the money 'saved' in these accounts was withdrawn annually, which was unsurprising given they accounted for a significant proportion of weekly wages.[44] It was claimed, nonetheless, that the system taught workers financial prudence and provided a means to 'invest' and earn handsomely.[45] For the company, it provided significant financial leverage, not just over its workforce but as the financial platform for its rapid expansion. It allowed British Bata to self-finance its growth by re-circulating some wages immediately back into the company – even before shops, restaurants and rents hoovered up the rest – and further enmeshed the workforce into its corporate machinery.

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[43] *Bata Record* (8 June 1934, 31 May 1935, 14 February 1936).
[44] Devinat, 'Bata System', 172-74; *Bata Record* (31 January, July 1936, 1 January, 5 March 1937).
[45] *The Times* (18 July 1933); *Bata Record* (28 September 1934, July 1936).

Nor was it just workers who were enmeshed by the firm's financial incentive schemes. A 'birth bounty' of five guineas for children of employees was introduced in 1936 that also issued 10% annual interest until the child's 24th birthday. The policy further incentivised loyalty and the company gained the stability of family men at the factory, a known conservative influence on workplace relations.[46] Financial rewards were also issued inside the factory, through production competitions, efficiency prizes, bonuses and for suggestions that improved manufacturing processes. Annual gardening prizes, entered by families on the estate and judged by Schmidt and Thomas Bata (Tomas Bata's son), started in 1934 and prize money steadily increased in value in the late 1930s. Window dressing awards worth several pounds were also judged and presented by Jan Bata when visiting the village, while workers and their families were able to receive discounts on Bata shoes, too.[47] In these many ways, the firm encouraged the families of workers to further engage and identify with the company.

If we look beyond the immediate commercial advantages these schemes offered, we can see how these various methods of financial interdependence promoted corporate consciousness and capitalist utopianism. Tomas Bata maintained 'workshop autonomy' would 'change the mentality' of his workforce and harness an individual's 'egoism, which always was and will remain the principal motive.' Competitive, entrepreneurial and materialistic, the wage earner would be transformed into a collaborator, businessman and, finally, capitalist.[48] Anthony Cekota, who managed Bata's public relations and lived in East Tilbury between 1935 and 1939, helped develop the principle of 'workshop autonomy' because he believed fixed weekly wages 'weakened the workers' sense of personal responsibility'. 'Profit-sharing' ensured employees

[46] *Times* (13 July 1932); Devinat, 'Bata System', 180; *Bata Record* (22 May 1936).
[47] *Bata Record* (September 1934-October 1937).
[48] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 41-47, 61, 81.

'work with the same application, the same desire for economy – in time, energy and material – and the same responsibility' as the individual craftsman. They were 'bound to the others by economics.'[49] By encouraged the highest standards of work, the quickest production and the least waste, workers became, supposedly, financial partners. In turning 'every worker into the first bookkeeper in the factory', Tomas thought he was 'elevating the workers, both materially and morally.'[50] This unity of economic interests was endlessly recounted by Thomas Bata (living in the East Tilbury as deputy general manager) and the works magazine which maintained 'every fellow-worker in the factory must be conscious that he is not only an employee, but at the same time an employer himself.'[51]

The CMC's financial enmeshment took a similar but less autocratic form. The firm also rejected direct profit-sharing and chose to implement other financial incentives, including an 'Atkinson' workshop bonus scheme in 1926 whereby half the savings in the cost of production past a certain threshold were distributed evenly among labourers. It was accompanied by an apprenticeship scheme that awarded similar 'efficiency bonuses.' Like Bata's 'workshop autonomy', it was meant to reduce waste, stimulate greater productivity and unify the interests of management and manual workers.[52] Significantly, however, all Crittall workers and their families were also offered, on multiple occasions, an opportunity to voluntarily invest in the future success of the company via preference shares and debenture bonds. Francis claimed to have started these scheme as early as 1904, and by 1908 board minutes confirm they were held by members of Braintree's middle- and lower-middle class.[53] When the company went

[49] *Bata Record* (8 June 1934).
[50] *Ibid* (24 February 1939); Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 175-77; *Stormy Years*, 37.
[51] *Bata Record* (1 June, 20 July 1934, 23 August, 11 November 1935).
[52] CMC, Board Minutes (January 1918); *Crittall Magazine* (February, September 1926, April 1927).
[53] CMC, Board Minutes (October 1907, December 1908); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 86, 113-14.

public in 1924, it issued over 60,000 cumulative preference shares at 8% annual interest and gave workers an opportunity to voluntarily purchase up to £200 of them. While nearly half were bought by Crittall family members or company directors, many were also snapped up by better-paid Crittall employees: sales managers, foremen and commercial travellers. Workers were urged to place their trust, and life savings, with the company and share in its success. By 1925, the CMC claimed to have between 1300 and 1400 preference shareholders, some of whom were employees with a few pounds invested. Ordinary (voting) shares were largely bought by the Crittall family.[54] Although the Braintree and West Co-operative Society accused CMC of 'compelling' its employees to invest in the company in July 1930, there is little evidence to support this claim and it was eventually withdrawn under the threat of legal action.[55] While less heavy-handed than Bata, the same principle was in motion here: to enmesh financial interests for mutual gain and encourage corporate consciousness.

These initial forays into self-financed expansion were broadened by a host of similar voluntary investment initiatives designed to fund the construction of Silver End. The schemes were a logical extension: if worker-residents could profit from the success of their employer, then why not earn dividends from their own rent, water and electricity bills, or local restaurant, hotel and stores? To achieve this, a small Crittall savings fund was greatly expanded in 1926 into the Crittall Housing and Investment Society, renamed the Crittall Benefit Society in 1928, as the means workers could invest in the construction and commercial success of Silver End, receiving 7% annual interest on preference shares. This, the directors reasoned, was an appropriate replacement for any direct profit-sharing scheme. The CMC accepted any donations over 1*s* and was keen to 'to create in the minds of employees an incentive to save'; consequently,

[54] CMC, Board Minutes (August, December 1924); *Chelmsford Chronicle* (25 December 1925).
[55] CMC, Board Minutes (July 1930).

investments could only be withdrawn with three months' notice. The society encouraged loyalty and good behaviour; if an employee was dismissed for misconduct their investment was returned.[56] For George Hayes, a Crittall factory operative since 1920, this simply made financial sense. 'They invited all the workmen to put a little money into Silver End', he recalled, 'well, it was a very good idea because you didn't get much money as all that but if you put half-a-crown in a week you didn't miss it, and come the finish […] you got several pounds.'[57] As Francis Crittall put it in a letter to the workforce in 1926, it meant all employees could take a 'vital interest' in Silver End, including 'the bottom dog who puts his bob a week into the venture.'[58]

For a time, too, the scheme worked as promised. Of the 1,891 eligible employees in 1928, 938 collectively invested nearly £7,000 into the development of Silver End by November 1930, many of whom would have lived in the village.[59] The village was, therefore, not just a capitalist utopia because it was built by an idealistic industrialist, but because some residents were, supposedly, 'minor capitalists' themselves. Alongside this, the firm also established its own building society so worker-residents could purchase their homes, which, again, meant further automatic reductions from weekly wages.[60] By the early 1930s, employees at Silver End could, theoretically, have automatic weekly wage reductions not only for necessities (rent, water and electricity bills) and welfare (healthcare insurance, sickness and benevolent funds, social club membership) but also for their life savings (benefit fund, CMC preference shares and mortgage payments), all before they had even visited the company store.

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[56] SEDC, Board Minutes (December 1925); CMC, Board Minutes (August 1927, October 1928); Crittall Employees' Benefit Fund, Board Minutes (December 1927-September 1928).
[57] George Hayes interviewed by Janet Gyford (23 June 1977, https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 6 November 2019).
[58] Quoted in Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 125-27.
[59] Crittall Employees' Benefit Fund, Board Minutes (January 1928, November 1930); SEDC, Board Minutes (August 1930).
[60] *Crittall Magazine* (October, December 1925, March 1926).

Investment opportunities were not the only way financial incentives were used to socially engineer behaviour and promote corporate consciousness. Fines for lateness, bonuses for attendance, cash prizes and competitions were used to promote a sense of community spirit and condition behaviour. Cash rewards for essays, community songs and poster competitions, all judged by Crittall family members, were granted and the winners' entries published in *The Crittall Magazine*.[61] As at East Tilbury, an annual garden competition – again, judged and presented by the Crittall family – gave residents a chance to win up to ten guineas. Baby competitions, raffles and whist drives had a similar aim: of encouraging community interaction through financial incentives and entertainment.[62] Although municipal estates operated similar incentives like annual garden competitions, participation was not compulsory and although garden cultivation was a condition of tenancy, in practice many spurned this labour-intensive and time-consuming hobby. Unlike in these capitalist 'utopias', residents faced no punishment for neglecting their gardens.[63] At Silver End and East Tilbury, anonymity and non-conformity were not options (discussed in chapter five). The Silver End stores also had a discount scheme that, like the Co-operative, offered a 1*s* bonus for every pound spent. As with voluntary profit-sharing schemes, Francis claimed such initiatives aimed 'to make the pound I pay my employees worth more than 20*s*.'[64] The stores also started a Christmas savings club in 1929, allowing customers to deposit upwards of 6*d* a week at 5% interest.[65] In this way, families of worker-residents were further rewarded for loyalty and financial enmeshment. By providing and financialising popular interwar working-class pastimes like gardening, raffles, newspaper

[61] *Ibid* (November 1926, September 1927, January 1929).
[62] *Ibid* (December 1927, September 1928); *Braintree and Witham Times* (18 August 1932).
[63] Olechnowicz, *Becontree Estate*, 105-107, 209-211.
[64] *Crittall Magazine* (November 1927); *Braintree and Witham Times* (August 1930).
[65] *Silver End Monthly* (March 1929).

competitions and sport, these companies were appropriating established forms of working-class respectability to better connect with their workforces.[66]

Financial enmeshment, therefore, partly enabled aggressive business expansion despite the huge expense of building these 'utopias.' Francis Crittall's optimistic claim in 1927 that the window market was 'practically unlimited' seemed to have been vindicated.[67] The CMC's public floatation in 1924, and subsequent fundraising, helped the firm triple its turnover between 1925 and 1927, to over £1.5 million, while net profits rose from £58,076 to £169,285. Between 1924 and 1929 the number of Crittall employees also doubled, to 3,561, and by 1930 the company boasted net profits of over £250,000.[68] British Bata, meanwhile, rapidly expanded from 545 employees in 1934 to 1,350 in October 1935, although thereafter grew steadily, and never employed more than 2,000 before the outbreak of war.[69] By 1937, the company was producing around 12,000 pairs of women's and children's shoes every day at East Tilbury, and roughly 2 million pairs a year.[70]

Thus, business ambition was equalled by attempts to change the mentality of their workforces, to turn wage earners into 'capitalists'. Of course, implicit in these schemes was the belief that the working class was unable to save, and there was a need to teach them financial frugality. This, of course, echoed arguments about meritocracy and the class structure: if the working class were simply better with their money and worked harder, they would be middle class. These assumptions ignored the fact that the working class had a long history of saving through

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[66] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 179-205. On interwar working-class culture see Ben Jones, *Working-Class in Mid-Twentieth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2012), 120-154.
[67] *Daily Mail* (8 September 1927); Tony Crosby, 'Silver End Model Village', 76.
[68] CMC, Statement of Annual Accounts (1924-1930); Board Minutes (January 1931); Blake, *Window Vision*, 72.
[69] *Bata Record* (17 May, 25 October 1935).
[70] Trades Union Congress (TUC), International Conference on Bata (February 1939, Modern Records Centre (MRC), University of Warwick, MSS.292/253 19/3); Bata Information Centre, 'Great Britain' (http://world.tomasbata.org/europe/great-britain/, accessed 7 November 2019).

friendly societies and co-operative organisations, and that poor wages and insecurity made it effectively impossible to save significant amounts, as Paul Johnson has demonstrated.[71] Nevertheless, financial enmeshment went beyond welfare, healthcare, accommodation, pensions and everyday consumption. These certainly did 'foster loyalty in many little ways', but through Bata's system of compulsory banking and workshop 'profit-sharing', and CMC's voluntary, but widely adopted, preference share offerings, the firms were able to propel their capitalist utopianism and engineer a unity of financial interests. Through this interdependence, the companies promoted the idea that residents in their diverse communities were personally invested in the success of their employer and, by extension, private enterprise. As the *Bata Record* was fond of repeating, their community was 'peacefully bonded' by a company that had supposedly elevated penniless workers into entrepreneurial shareholders.[72] The promise of security and shared prosperity was undeniably a strong argument in turbulent times. Through the financial enmeshment of their communities the political economy theoretically gained not just consent from those near the bottom of society, but fervour for it.

Cultural Enmeshment

A year before Tomas Bata began planning his British colony, he spoke to his workforce about 'the great crisis of the English nation.' Why was the pioneer of industrial capitalism struggling economically? 'Because in England industrialists and workers don't understand each other, they distrust each other', and their failure to collaborate had led to the mutual disintegration of British industry. Dissent, protest and unions were an anchor on capitalist progress and

[71] Paul Johnson, *Saving and Spending: The Working-class Economy in Britain 1870-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).
[72] *Bata Record* (9 October 1936, 1 October 1937).

allowing workers a forceful voice in industry simply deepened the nation's woes.[73] Tomas, of course, did not suffer such problems in Zlín. In his scientifically managed and socially engineered Moravian arcadia, he monitored, disciplined and governed the everyday lives of residents. There was no room for independent workers' clubs or union activity. Advertising boards dominated the city's skyline with slogans like 'WORK IS ENNOBLING!', 'BE THE FIRST!' and 'BIGGER EXPORTS = MORE BREAD!'[74] Recreational and cultural control played a powerful role in disciplining society. Bata's philosophy aimed to gravitate all aspects of residents' lives towards the company.[75] The importance placed on culture as a method of achieving acquiescence was exemplified by Tomas' remarkable assertion that 'the man who has a flat in a building with a garden is more stable, and instead of following politics would rather potter about his garden or sit out on the lawn, so he doesn't go to the pub or political meetings.'[76] Time-consuming 'rational' recreation was therefore an important means of preventing rival forms of associational civic culture. As Neville Chamberlain had also argued in 1920, 'every spade of manure dug in' helped prevent revolutionary sentiment, and these opinions were shared by middle-class organisations like the National Council of Social Service.[77]

This cultural enmeshment was replicated at East Tilbury with vigour. By 1937, when the core of the village had been built, the company provided a plethora of leisure activities workers, worker-residents and their families could participate in every night and weekend. Regular dinners, dances, lectures, fancy dress parties and sports dominated the social calendar. Social activities were extensively covered in the weekly *Bata Record* and advertised in handbills

[73] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 209-10.
[74] Kasper and Kasperova, 'Bata Company in Zlín', 322.
[75] Ševeček, 'Company Towns', 27-32, and Martin Marek and Vit Strobach, 'Identity, Discipline and Order', 51-53 in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*.
[76] Quoted in Smith, 'Bata Estate', 58.
[77] Quoted in Olechnowicz, *Becontree Estate*, 168-69.

distributed with wages. Those not inclined to participate were encouraged to cheer on Bata athletes, with the company's supporters' club providing buses when playing away. These were usually played against other local companies (including the CMC) and watched by Bata's directors. The Bata Band would play at such events and the company would sell products from its stores. Cash prizes were sometimes provided for winning tournaments and competitions too, and the company would sell specialised, discounted sports shoes to workers, furthering its financial enmeshment. Interdepartmental football and cricket tournaments were held, and sports club members had access to the gymnasium on the top floor of Community House. The 'social hall' was made available every evening after work and in summer the 80ft lido was available exclusively to employees and their families, and a children's playground was placed next to it. Themed parties and events were common too, such as Valentine's Day dances, Christmas parties, bonfire firework displays, concerts, amateur dramatics, comedy nights and whist drives. Sports tournaments or fireworks displays attracted thousands of locals to isolated East Tilbury: the Silver Jubilee in October 1935 drew over 5,000 revellers. Evening and weekend outings were regularly arranged: to London to see a play or show, an evening boat ride along the Thames, or to Margate in the summer. During bank holidays and the company's annual holiday a host of activities were organised to keep workers entertained and apolitical.[78] Management, meanwhile, would often discuss how best to foster 'team spirit' inside and beyond the factory gates.[79] Although work outings were not unusual by the 1930s, British Bata went well beyond the norm: few firms were willing to subsidise week-long holidays to Czechoslovakia.[80]

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[78] *Bata Record* (1934-1939).
[79] *Ibid* (23 April 1937).
[80] Crewe, 'What about the Workers?'

By providing popular cultural activities British Bata's management tried to maximise workers' identification with the company. Even if such activities were motivated by an effort to induce conformity, this abundance of recreation helped project a utopian image of the village, form better workplace relations, and bind the workforce and management together, all while exerting a moralising and educative influence. Tomas Bata insisted 'recreation should be consciously organised to strengthen our character and our will', and this was embraced by the directors in Britain.[81] On numerous occasions, the *Bata Record* took aim at those disinterested in company recreation, calling it a 'duty' to engage and, consequently, have 'loyalty embedded in your soul.' 'There are some people who walk about in such an unconscious state that they are oblivious of the biggest poster on the notice board, deaf to the [company] radio, and unwilling to scan more than the funny column of their newspaper,' Bartram Savage lectured readers, 'we consider it a duty of the enlightened ones who do find our enterprise an interesting thing, to try to educate the others into giving it a thought.'[82] Popular working-class team sports like football, cricket and netball, for example, developed *esprit de corps* and provided excellent 'training for the workplace' by teaching workers about 'healthy competition', deference to authority, teamwork, body cultivation, perseverance and cross-class camaraderie.[83] Deference, in particular, was reinforced by a need to feel 'grateful' for the company's facilities: it was 'the most fortunate community in the country.'[84]

In this way, these villages mirrored wider debates about the use of leisure between the wars. Ross McKibbin has argued that the middle class triumphed in depoliticising popular culture, which mystified class differences and helped embed socially conservative and individualistic

[81] Devinat, 'Bata System', 182; Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 117-18.
[82] *Bata Record* (16 November 1934, 7 June 1935, 3 April 1936, 11 June 1937).
[83] *Ibid* (1 June 1934, 5 July 1935, 1 January 1936).
[84] *Ibid* (1 June 1934, 22 January 1937).

'civil cultures' in British society.[85] Company villages were the perfect environments for imposing such conditions. By the mid-to-late 1930s, many educationalists, psychologists and youth workers were pushing a largely unfounded narrative that falling working hours had created a 'problem of leisure', usually specific to the working class, which resulted in seemingly unproductive, 'passive' and uneducated recreational pursuits.[86] This was especially true of municipal housing estates, where a sense of civic spirit was supposedly found wanting due to a lack of middle-class leadership.[87] Company villages were seemingly one antidote. British Bata often instructed workers not to waste free time at 'cocktail parties and the cinema', and certainly not political gatherings, but take 'Zlínspiration' from the mother city and use it to better their value to the company, for example by learning a language. Ambition, employees were told, did not end after work and to truly progress they should 'make your work your life's interest, live near to it and find your pleasure and recreation among your fellow workers.'[88] For British Bata, the 'problem of leisure' was a golden opportunity to engineer an environment for its own gain.

As such, the activities available were highly prescribed and monitored. The sports and social club was administered by the company's full-time welfare manager, and undemocratically overseen by British Bata's managing director Victor Schmidt and staff manager Arthur Tucker, who were appointed president and vice-president, respectively. At workshop level, activities were arranged through management, who sometimes acted as authority figures in sides.[89] Specific sports clubs were formed by directors or senior management too, who presided over

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[85] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 527-36 for a summary; also, *Parties and People: England, 1914-1951*.
[86] *Ibid*, 234-35; Elizabeth Wilburn, 'Police-led boys' clubs in England and Wales, 1918-1951' (unpublished PhD thesis: Open University, 2019).
[87] Olechnowicz, *Becontree Estate*, 45-62.
[88] *Bata Record* (24 August, 26 October 1934, 8, 22 January 1937, 28 January 1938).
[89] *Ibid* (15 June 1934, 28 February 1936); BHC, 'Joan James' Memories' (https://www.bataheritagecentre.org.uk/bata-memories/memories/, accessed 14 November 2019).

their annual dinners or events (diners ate on Bata-branded tableware), patronising players with awards and delivering speeches. This was mirrored in the Bata Supporters Club, where Tucker claimed the presidency and *Bata Record* editor Arthur Bartram Savage the chairmanship, but also at regular dinners where Schmidt, Thomas Bata or directors from Zlín addressed employees. Dances and work outings, too, were supervised by senior management and their wives.[90] In October 1936, British Bata chairman and high-ranking military figure Sir Edward Spears formed the Bata British Legion, with himself as president, Schmidt as vice-president and Tucker as treasurer.[91] This blend of patronage and surveillance loomed over the daily lives of worker-residents like a shadow. Every morning, after breakfast in the company canteen, a broadcast detailing company news was played from the 'radio centre'; a routine that was repeated after lunch, too.[92] As in Zlín, no independent clubs operated at East Tilbury and the range of activities deemed acceptable to the company was limited to 'productive', 'rational' and politically non-threatening pursuits designed to foster a sense of collective belonging and loyalty.[93]

Unlike 'dry' utopias such as Bournville, Saltaire and (initially) Port Sunlight, both companies took a pragmatic approach to alcohol consumption, preferring to profit from its controlled use and maintaining a veneer of individual liberty. Although Tomas Bata banned the sale of alcohol in Zlín, believing American economic ascendency was a result of prohibition (1920-1933), such draconian measures were never likely to prove popular in England.[94] At Silver End, for example, a pub was located less than a mile from the village, leaving an outright ban unenforceable. As

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[90] *Bata Record* (28 September, 19 October 1934, 18 January, 12 April 1935, 12, 25 June, 24 July 1936, 13 August 1937).
[91] *Ibid* (16 October 1936, 15 January 1937).
[92] *Ibid* (28 May, 11 June 1937).
[93] *Ibid* (5 February 1937).
[94] Devinat, 'Bata System', 181-83; Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 179-181.

such, British Bata applied for an alcohol licence in February 1937 to 'bring its people into communities where they could be well looked after' and stressed its limited and strictly supervised consumption. It was granted a year later, and the Bata Recreational Club was formed in Community House soon after. To emphasise the respectability of the establishment, membership cost between 4*s* and 5*s* a year, opening hours were restricted, during the day drinks were only served with meals, and the club was closely supervised by the company. Predictably, Schmidt was appointed president, Bartram Savage chairman and the firm's welfare manager was treasurer.[95] Francis Crittall, known for his fondness of whiskey, was more relaxed about the issue and installed bars at the firm's social clubs in Braintree and Witham. At Silver End, he declared (to some applause) that the company's hotel – a well-to-do establishment – would have a full licence to let 'the light of freedom shine in everyone's eyes.' He maintained this was essential to the 'harmony' of the village and *The Crittall Magazine* joked afterwards that Silver End's fame would not be for 'gun running.'[96] Drinking was, of course, a popular British pastime and it made sense to cater for it in a upright, carefully monitored establishment where 'all the profit from drinks would go back into the development company.' Alcohol was occasionally served in the village hall, but a Crittall family member was in attendance to observe proceedings.[97] The fact these companies had few problems obtaining licences, where in municipal estates like Becontree pubs ('refreshment houses') were scarce and difficult to get to, was probably due to the middle-class leadership within these communities and the milieu of controlled consumption.[98]

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[95] *Chelmsford Chronicle* (19 February 1937); *Bata Record* (14 January 1938); Rumsey, *Bata Factory*.
[96] CMC, Board Minutes (May 1927, October 1928); *Crittall Magazine* (November 1927).
[97] *Crittall Magazine* (November 1927); *Braintree and Witham Times* (15 December 1932).
[98] Olechnowicz, *Becontree Estate*, 78-80.

The CMC also promoted 'productive' leisure and rational recreation for moral instruction and business efficiency. At Silver End, the considerable amount of money invested in the village's facilities was predictably justified along the same lines as welfare expenditure: that it helped develop mental and physical health, virtue, 'fair play and honour', discipline, teamwork and self-improvement. Team sports at Silver End, especially, took up a sizeable amount of space in *The Crittall Magazine* and the *Braintree and Witham Times*. Meanwhile, a family's garden was considered 'an index' to their integrity.[99] The firm also accepted a 'problem' of leisure existed and it had a duty to sculpt free time. As Francis argued, the utopian garden city was partly a response to the anonymity and alienation that came with urbanisation and corporatisation: Silver End attempted to safeguard individuals' identities through the 'intimacy' of rural life and associational culture.[100] Sports teams were branded with the Crittall name rather than by their location, and the firm lamented workers who chose not to play for the company side, which it deemed a 'service' expected of employees.[101] The firm took particular pride in its football team, which brought it regional fame and significant local support. By the mid-1930s, the CMC had on its books several Welsh amateur internationals, six former Tottenham players and were coached by ex-Arsenal centre-half Charlie Jones; many of them lived and worked in Silver End.[102] Between 4,000 and 6,000 spectators watched them play in cup matches, aided by the spectator's club which was led by former captain, manager and secretary of the football club, Walter Crittall. The club's motto, 'the more we are together, the stronger we shall be', encapsulated this cultural enmeshment.[103]

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[99] *Crittall Magazine* (May, July 1927); *Braintree and Witham Times* (19 May 1932).
[100] *Crittall Magazine* (June 1929); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 117.
[101] *Crittall Magazine* (June, July 1927).
[102] *Ibid* (January 1929); *Daily Mail* (8 January 1937, 19 January 1938); King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 14, 85.
[103] *Crittall Magazine* (August, October 1925, June 1926, September 1927); *Daily Mail* (20 October 1930).

The cultural leadership of the Crittall family did not end there and, as at East Tilbury, the early years of the village were marked by a total absence of independent clubs or institutions. Previously independent groups such as the successful Pontypool Prize Singers, who visited Silver End in 1928 when raising money for miners' relief, were hired and renamed 'The Crittall Gleemen', adopting a Crittall uniform in the process.[104] Walter, who lived in the village until 1934, was the chairman of the staff club and an active patron of company tennis. He hosted competitions for white-collar employees at his home and establishing interdepartmental tournaments (the Walter Crittall Cup). He also held regular garden parties, dances, lunches and dinners for staff.[105] Francis, who helped form the Braintree football, cricket and cycling clubs in the late 1870s, was the president of the village's bowls club and its horticultural society, and the chairman of the village hall society. He was also chairman of the local fraternal organisation, the Silver End Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes (the 'Francis Henry Lodge'), and presided over the Essex County Cycling and Athletic Association in 1925 (he was replaced by Ellen in 1926). The firm played a key role in organising county athletics competitions in the mid-1920s.[106] By 1929, Francis was also president of the Essex Agricultural Society.[107] Meanwhile Valentine Crittall, who lived in nearby Wickham Bishops, was vice-chairman of the bowls club and active in the management of Silver End athletics, cricket, the British Legion, village hall events and summer festivals.[108] The Silver End Tenants Association, which dealt with formal complaints, was also initially led by Walter and Valentine.[109]

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[104] *Crittall Magazine* (June 1928).
[105] John Crittall interview with Thea Thompson (1974-77, British Library C707/518/1-2); *Crittall Magazine* (February 1925, August 1929).
[106] *Crittall Magazine* (March-July 1925, July 1926, July 1927, June 1929); *Braintree and Witham Times* (28 March, 31 October 1930).
[107] Essex Agricultural Society, Dinner Menu (June 1929, ERO T/P 527/1).
[108] *Crittall Magazine* (April, October 1926); *Braintree and Witham Times* (20 December 1929, 21 February, 28 March 1930).
[109] SEDC, Board Minutes (June 1927).

Dan Crittall, who lived in Silver End and was a manager at the works, was even more dominant. 'Mr Dan' assumed the role of manager and president of the Crittall Athletic (Silver End) Football Club, and claimed the presidency of the Crittall Horticultural Society, Silver End branch of the British Legion, village rifle club and Order of Buffaloes.[110] More eccentric than his brothers, Dan held a passion for trains (he had a quarter-mile light railway built around his home, 'Le Chateau') and formed a model engineering club in the village.[111] He also led the Silver End Fire Brigade and was closely involved with the local Boys' Brigade.[112] In these positions of cultural authority, the family cemented itself as the unquestioned figurehead of the village and region. As the voice of the community in nearly all local events, from children's concerts to sporting ceremonies, they became masters of pageantry and patronage, extending their economic dominance to a cultural omnipresence. As heads of these spectacles, they were visible figureheads and focal points for the community, endowing Silver End with a sense of purpose and collective consciousness.

Women and girls, too, were integrated into these corporate apparatuses. Notwithstanding the all-women lead glazing factory established in 1923 – a short-lived experiment – few women worked at the firm other than in clerical roles. Nonetheless, women and girls were encouraged to take part in sporting competitions and festivals (also open to the families of employees), and had its own women's social club in Braintree.[113] *The Crittall Magazine* had a regular 'ladies' page' in which Ellen Crittall would provide marriage and domestic advice, like 'no man likes a wife to be talkative when things are evolving in [her husband's] brain' and to provide dinner at

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[110] *Crittall Magazine* (July 1927, May 1929); *Braintree and Witham Times* (6 December 1929, 17 April 1931, 30 August 1934, 2 January 1936).
[111] *Crittall Magazine* (May 1928); *Braintree and Witham Times* (8 June 1933).
[112] *Braintree and Witham Times* (1 February, 24 May 1934). Dan's interest in the Boys' Brigade probably stemmed from his military interest: he served in the Royal Naval Air Service in the First World War.
[113] *Crittall Magazine* (February, April, May 1928); *Braintree and Witham Times* (2 July 1931); Blake, *Window Vision*, 44.

the 'time he wants.' But as nearly all Silver End women lived outside the company's formal social apparatuses, the family sought other ways of culturally enmeshing wives and daughters.[114] Most early settlers in the village were newly married couples, such as Catherine Jackson who moved to the village from London in the late 1920s, and found the modern melting pot a lonely place, living like 'a stranger in the county.' Ellen Crittall and Mr Dan's wife Hilda (née Jacob) integrated many of these women into the community, and through social activities helped foster a sense of belonging. They were ably assisted by family-member Robert Gordon, the Silver End physician and CMC welfare superintendent, who encouraged women in the village to turn to them for assistance.[115] As Silver End's paternalistic figureheads, they regularly called upon residents and urged them to attend community events, which they would usually judge and present trophies (sometimes named after them). Occasionally, their homes in Silver End were made available for small gatherings or celebrations, and a few days every summer 'Manors' was opened for the public to enjoy Francis and Ellen's large garden and collection ('museum') of objects from their worldwide travels.[116] Such ritualised events cemented their supremacy.

Like the Crittall men, whose social advance, association with 'trade' and liberal politics alienated them from the local gentry, Crittall women also made efforts to form vertical bonds. At Silver End, Ellen Crittall delivered lectures and attended events organised by the women's section of the village hall, judged and organised the annual show, raised money for the British Legion, and regularly addressed the Boys' Brigade.[117] Hilda Crittall chaired the local Infant

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[114] *Crittall Magazine* (June 1926).
[115] King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 89-91.
[116] *Crittall Magazine* (August 1927, January 1928); *Braintree and Witham Times* (26 May, 18 August 1932, 28 June 1934); John Crittall interview with Thea Thompson.
[117] *Crittall Magazine* (July 1929); *Braintree and Witham Times* (13 April 1933, 1 March 1934, 23 June 1936).

Welfare Society, was president of the women's section of the British Legion, and was closely involved with the Girl Guides.[118] Olive Crittall, Valentine's first wife (née MacDermott) who passed away in March 1932, was also active in the infant welfare society and British Legion, and was president of the local Nursing Association (assisted by Hilda).[119]

However, the main cultural institution for women in the village was the Women's Institute, which was led by all three women plus Mary Crittall (née Gordon, Walter's second wife). Started by Olive, after her death the presidency was passed first to Ellen, and then Mary who held the role into the 1950s. While membership was never huge – no larger than 200 before 1939 – the institute was an active and visible presence that regularly organised social events throughout the year. Its activities intended to simultaneously consolidate cross-class solidarity and reinforce class distinctions, as the hierarchy of the institution mirrored that of the factory. Despite claims that it was 'non-political […] genuinely democratic', there is little doubt the institute was a conservative force in the village that strengthened existing class and gender roles. Valentine Crittall, then head of the company, even defended its impartiality from 'accusations' at a dinner in 1935.[120] Although the institute could act as a form of socially conservative feminism – educating and empowering women while simultaneously reinforcing domesticity – in Silver End there's little to suggest the branch challenged the status quo.[121] In fact, it could often function as a method of social discipline: in September 1934, Walter Crittall wrote an open letter complaining of 'boorish and disgusting behaviour of certain men and boys in relation to the physical culture carried out in the village', which was undoubtedly a strong

[118] *Braintree and Witham Times* (7 March, 22 May, 28 November 1930, 30 January 1931).
[119] *Ibid* (30 January, 27 March, 12 June 1931, 10 March 1932).
[120] Silver End Women's Institute, Accounts (1932-1939, SEHS); *Braintree and Witham Times* (25 February 1932, 19 December 1935).
[121] See Catriona Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2013).

warning against disrespectful male behaviour. Crittall men would attend institute events and John Crittall, Walter's son, even presided over dinners.[122] Such actions suggest that rather than an appetite for female emancipation, the organisation was used to reproduce class and gender norms.

Nor was this cultural hegemony strictly limited to the immediate Crittall family. Eric Rowe, Francis and Ellen's nephew and manager of the SEDC, took the lead during festive events in the village too, and was also chairman of the British Legion branch and president of the Silver End Cricket Club.[123] Dr Gordon, whose position allowed him to maintain a close eye on the workforce and village residents, and who married Francis and Ellen Crittall's niece, led the village hall committee and sat on the Silver End Athletics Club committee.[124] Robert Small, the fear-inducing director and Silver End resident, also sat on these two committees plus the football club and British Legion.[125] Francis and Ellen's son-in-law and company director, Fred Walker, was chairman of the firm's athletic club in Witham and sat on the Crittall Social Club committee alongside Frank Hobson, the company's publicity man and editor of the *Braintree and Witham Times*, who was also acting vice-president of the Silver End Bowls Club, chairman of the Silver End Community Council, and was heavily involved with the Boys' Brigade.[126] Many of these managers' wives also took the lead in the Women's Institute.[127] Such positions were often interchangeable and hereditary: Dan Crittall took over from his late father as president of the bowls club in 1935, and Valentine the presidency of Silver End Horticulture Society.[128]

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[122] *Braintree and Witham Times* (19 December 1935, 24 December 1936).
[123] *Silver End Monthly* (March 1929); *Braintree and Witham Times* (6 December 1929, 21 February 1930).
[124] *Braintree and Witham Times* (3 October 1930, 29 September 1932).
[125] *Crittall Magazine* (June 1928); *Braintree and Witham Times* (20 December 1929, 29 September 1932).
[126] *Crittall Magazine* (January 1926, January 1929); *Braintree and Witham Times* (21, 28 March 1930, 13 February 1931, 7 March 1935).
[127] Silver End Women's Institute, Accounts (1932-1939, SEHS).
[128] *Braintree and Witham Times* (15 November 1935, 23 July 1936).

Social engineering was achieved not through 'coercion', as Francis Crittall later put it, but 'steering' the community and emulation.[129] This network of cultural supervision and guidance acted as a comprehensive system of surveillance, self-surveillance and scrutiny over nearly all social activities within the village.

Silver End, therefore, attempted to recapture a paternalism in business and community life that corporate capitalism had weakened. Often, this could be quite literal: streets were named after the family and the first child born in Silver End was named after Valentine Crittall, who was declared the boy's godfather. Around 3,000 people celebrated Francis' 70th birthday in July 1930, where he was presented with a bronze bust of himself by his employees, and the whole village turned out for Francis and Ellen's Golden Jubilee in 1933, where the village hall, which was lined with oil paintings of long-serving CMC workers (from directors to mechanics), was decorated in Crittall colours.[130] Paternalism was strongly emphasised in Susan King's interviews with interwar residents, nearly all of whom recalled personal stories of interactions with the family, from Ellen waiting on her servants at Christmas to the time Francis and Ellen delivered a jar of honey to every home in Silver End.[131] Children were strongly integrated into CMC paternalism through regular parties and festive events (Dr Gordon would play Father Christmas), and the publishing of children's poems in *The Crittall Magazine*.[132] Crittall children often took ceremonial roles within the community too, such as awarding prizes or singing at events, and leading the Girl Guides.[133] John Crittall, who later ran the company, was especially prominent in Silver End life from a young age. He delivered grocery parcels to older employees

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[129] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 146.
[130] *Crittall Magazine* (March 1927); *Braintree and Witham Times* (7 September 1933).
[131] King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 34-35, 58-60.
[132] *Crittall Magazine* (March 1928); *Braintree and Witham Times* (12 January 1933); King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 105.
[133] *Braintree and Witham Times* (21 February 1930, 15, 20 February 1931, 1 September 1932, 6 December 1934).

at Christmas 'as a present from his grandfather', wrote for the works paper, awarded prizes and toured the factories with his father, Walter.[134] These relationships not only reproduced existing social and economic hierarchies, but also propelled a corporate consciousness that extolled the unity of the community despite clear class divisions. If the firm believed it was 'a family with the Guv'nor at its head', many interviewees (children in the interwar period) wholeheartedly absorbed this message. Francis was originally nicknamed 'father' in the works and residents claimed he was 'for his men and the men were for the Guv'nor.' As Susan King put it, worker-residents 'incorporated their employer into their sense of identity, by accepting […] he had shared their struggle and was working in their interests.'[135]

Works magazines helped nurture this corporate consciousness. As the likes of Steven Crewe and Michael Heller have argued, magazines were a vehicle for establishing a corporate identity and culture within and outside the workplace, promoting unity and connecting readers with the 'imagined' company community. After the First World War, these magazines were specifically aimed at manual rather than white-collar employees and were more commonplace. A system of shared values, interests and ideological assumptions was attempted not only through company news but features that enhanced a sense of collective belonging and friendship: marriages, births, deaths, birthdays, poems, stories, gossip, competitions, local news, photographs and sport, all dressed in an apolitical company uniform.[136] The *Bata Record*, *Crittall Magazine* and short-lived *Silver End Monthly* certainly fit this mould: affordable papers written (or overseen) by senior management as an instrument of their paternalistic power, which often contained moralistic cajoling. The *Bata Record*

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[134] *Ibid* (23 March 1933); John Crittall interview with Thea Thompson.
[135] *Crittall Magazine* (September 1925, January 1926); King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 49, 58, 75.
[136] Crewe, 'What about the Workers?', 544-568; Michael Heller, 'British Company Magazines, 1879-1939: The Origins and Functions of House Journals in Large-Scale Organisations', *Media History* 15:2 (2009), 143-66.

claimed to be Britain's only weekly works magazine, although the CMC's publication of the weekly *Braintree and Witham Times* after 1929 can be interpreted as a glorified works magazine. Readers were persistently reminded the papers were 'theirs' and anybody could contribute, although few workers chose to (or submissions were excluded), and the tone was often less empowering than commanding (particularly the *Bata Record*). As with company recreations, it was considered a duty of employees and their families to read the magazine. Pages aimed at children and women, which reinforced gender roles, widened their appeal, while the use of familial terms for company directors – and flattering autobiographies – projected an image of paternalistic patronage. By 1929, *The Crittall Magazine* was selling around 2,500 every month, and *Braintree and Witham Times* probably sold far more than this, while the *Bata Record* claimed a circulation of 'several thousand' just a year after it started. In the minds of the reader, the 'imagined community' was reified. Content bristled with obsequiousness, too: Francis was the 'truly-described saviour of industrial mid-Essex', for example.[137]

At East Tilbury, paternalism was less literal. Tomas Bata had used similarly familial language, believing his company was a social body where each workshop resembled a family, with its foreman as its father, and where 'leaders owe love to their subordinates and the subordinated owe respect to their leaders.'[138] These themes were often repeated in the *Bata Record*, which celebrated its international 'family' spread over different continents. The editor accepted the firm operated a 'benevolent paternalism' at East Tilbury but claimed the community was evidence 'that capitalism, rightly controlled, can be a splendid thing rather than the cures that

[137] *Crittall Magazine* (August 1929); *Braintree and Witham Times* (14 March 1935); *Bata Record* (17 May 1935).
[138] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 49-50, 200-7.

some would have us believe.'[139] The cultural hegemony company directors enjoyed sometimes crossed into what could traditionally be termed paternal – Schmidt appeared at children's Christmas parties and other events – but most of this 'human touch' treatment was left to a young Thomas Bata. Aside from the fact British Bata had dozens of juveniles living in its hostels and was *de facto* a surrogate parent, Thomas also coached table tennis, wrote articles for *Bata Record*, hosted events and performing ceremonial roles. On such occasions, he repeated the need for the company to act like a football team and demonstrate 'perfect harmony.'[140] His uncle Jan, meanwhile, had a large flat built in Community House for when he stayed at East Tilbury, and when visiting would speak to the hostel boys or participate in recreational events with other directors.[141] The apparent accessibility of the firm's elite no doubt fostered a sense of collective unity.

As at Silver End, it was not only class hierarchies that were reproduced in – and strengthened by – cultural activities, but also gender norms. Tomas Bata, keenly aware the family unit was a socially stabilising institution and a means corporate enmeshment could be extended, also operated a marriage bar and believed women's primary role was as wife and mother. Work in Bata factories was strictly segregated by gender; women and girls were employed in large numbers as seamstresses, shop assistants, typists and box packers, although unmarried women could be promoted to lower management roles. Girls living in Bata hostels were taught household management, cooking, care for children and sewing to make them 'desirable brides.' They could also partake in sporting and social activities, which were largely gender-

[139] *Bata Record* (17 August 1934, 6 March, 11 September 1936, 16, 23 April 1937).
[140] *Ibid* (21 December 1934, 15, 29 November 1935, 22 January 1937); BHC, 'Cliff and Millie Pritchard's Memories' (https://www.bataheritagecentre.org.uk/bata-memories/memories/ accessed 5 December 2019).
[141] *Bata Record* (17 August 1934, 9 October 1936).

defined and segregated.[142] The *Bata Record's* women's page likewise covered these subjects. When visiting East Tilbury (to see her son) in March 1936, Marie Bata, Tomas' wife, talked to wives on the estate about 'domestic problems' and called for greater social interaction to battle the 'loneliness' of moving to the new estate.[143] The women responded by forming a residents' association, led by the wives of senior management and directors, which organised social events and competitions (although raffles were banned due to Bata's anti-gambling rules). Bartram Savage, Thomas Bata and Victor Schmidt regularly attended meetings and predictably urged the development of 'comradeship' in the community.[144]

Parents and children, too, were integrated into Bata's cultural machinery. Hundreds of parents enjoyed factory and hostel tours from 1937 onwards, about the time the company came under intense public scrutiny (see chapter five), which offered them a chance to read Bata propaganda, eat a free lunch in Community House and even win a pair of shoes.[145] Children's parties and sporting activities, overseen by company directors, and an infant welfare centre further enmeshed parents of juvenile operatives.[146] Older children could join the Bata Scouts or Young Women's Institute, the latter hosting paternalistic (and moralising) competitions for 'collabatrices' like wardrobe cleanliness contests that were judged by Victor Schmidt's wife, Vlasta.[147] This paternalism was extended in the *Bata Record*, which had a children's section written by 'Uncle Jeff' (*The Crittall Magazine* had 'Kiddies Korner').[148] The cultural and social control both companies enjoyed in their 'utopian' communities therefore strongly reproduced

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[142] *Ibid* (28 June 1935); Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 196-97.
[143] *Bata Record* (20 March 1936); Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 10.
[144] *Bata Record* (April, 1 May, 19 June, 4 September 1936, 19 February 1937).
[145] *Ibid* (24 September 1937, 7 January 1938).
[146] *Ibid* (29 October 1937).
[147] *Ibid* (16 February, 12 December 1935, 29 January, 25 June, 9 September 1937).
[148] *Crittall Magazine* (January 1928); *Bata Record* (6 December 1935).

class hierarchies and gender norms, supporting patriarchy and inequality in service of the status quo.

Ideological and Political Enmeshment

Political engagement and leadership were well-entrenched means of extending power beyond the factory. Other utopian capitalists had embraced this too: from Titus Salt's support of the Chartist movement to William Lever's positions within the Liberal Party, these men tended to oppose the Tory landholding aristocracy – whose wealth was deemed unearned – and stressed their humble origins.[149] Like these men Francis Crittall was also a liberal, but unlike his predecessors his anti-statist leanings stopped him pursuing formal political power. Throughout his life he was a free trader, opposed to socialism and openly advocated trade restrictions with Soviet Russia. He was also a social reformer who wished to reconcile class interests through 'mutual understanding', and his anti-Toryism even led him to advocate the nationalisation of land in later life, seeing in landholding a form of unearned wealth utterly opposed to his vision of meritocratic capitalism.[150] But while he was undoubtedly motivated by wanting to elevate the living conditions of his workforce, Silver End was an opportunity to operate with more autonomy, extend his power and distance himself from local government interference. By July 1930, the CMC were formally lobbying the government to establish their own independent governing body that encompassed an (incomplete) Silver End and the Cressing Road-Clockhouse Way estate, liberating the company from a 'hostile' Braintree council. While the

[149] Jack Reynolds, *Great Paternalist: Titus Salt and the Growth of Nineteenth-Century Bradford* (Maurice Temple Smith, 1983).
[150] *Daily Mail* (12 June 1931); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 48, 146-50; Blake, *Window Vision*, 183.

application failed it could have allowed the company considerable freedom, in a situation akin to William Margrie's proposed privatisation of parliament.[151]

If Francis was unwilling to formally integrate himself into Britain's political machinery, then his eldest son Valentine was. At first, Valentine's political success within the Labour Party appears to contradict the utopianism of his wider family, a belief that subsequently led some locals to erroneously think Silver End was a 'socialist' and not capitalist utopia.[152] The Maldon Constituency Labour Party was formed in 1918, and after local coal merchant Walter Burrows, a friend of Valentine's, asked him to stand for the party in the 1923 election (after Francis had refused), he accepted and remarkably won by just 49 votes. With only three months to canvass, party members were astounded that the previously 'impregnable' Conservative seat fell, overturning a 4,000-vote majority. Although he lost the 1924 election 11 months later by 3,886 votes, his victory was not a result of any explicitly socialist policies but likely due to his business credentials.[153] The Labour Party headquarters confidentially expressed doubts over the 'sincerity' of Crittall's appointment, but Burrows convinced them of his suitability even if an ideological conversion to socialism had clearly not occurred. Propaganda for both elections stressed Valentine's economic orthodoxy during the deep industrial depression and called for 'practical' change, even claiming he would oppose many of his party's policies. At no point did he reference socialism, and instead advanced policies for a more competitive and humane capitalism: ending cartels, maintaining free trade, disarmament, improved national transportation and electrification, better social security and opposing nationalisation.[154]

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[151] CMC, Board Minutes (July 1930); *Braintree and Witham Times* (26 June 1931).
[152] Albert Poulter interviewed by Janet Gyford (4 November 1980, https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 20 April 2020); Imperial War Museum, Unnamed interview (Catalogue No. 24945); King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 17, 96.
[153] Ken Cuthbe records (ERO A8184); *Maldon Constituency Labour Party: The First Fifty Years, 1918-1968* (Chelmsford: Barham and Moore, 1968). Valentine served as Private Parliamentary Secretary to the Air Minister in 1924, was knighted in 1930 and served as director of the Bank of England, 1948-1955.
[154] Records of Maldon Constituency Labour Party (MCLP), (1923-1924, ERO A8071).

Valentine's candidacy was a shrewd move from an ideologically mixed party projecting moderation, and as Martin Pugh points out, Labour was a natural home for ex-Liberals given its commitment to free trade, social welfare and Gladstonian foreign policy. Indeed, Valentine was not the only businessman to embrace the Labour Party, he was joined by the likes of self-made entrepreneur William Royce and metal merchant George Strauss. Maldon was 'probably unwinnable by any other Labour candidate' but Valentine's image as an 'enlightened employer' secured him victory.[155]

Valentine's political leadership undoubtedly provided him and the CMC with powerful advantages, and not simply because he was portrayed as a friend to the working class. When he critiqued the local government for failing to loan the CMC capital to build Silver End, he was readily supported by his party, some of whom formed the local opposition, and when a rival window firm went on strike in 1926, Burrows financially supported the strike fund via the Workers' Union.[156] Similarly, when the National Government reduced expenditure on house building in the early 1930s, which impacted the CMC, he used his position to critique the policy.[157] Local ceremonial functions, including lecturing at May Day celebrations in Braintree, also legitimised his role as employer, labour leader and seemingly benevolent patron.[158] His leadership resulted in recognition from national political leaders and personalities, which further consolidated CMC power. In February 1926, the then embryonic Silver End was visited by Ellen Wilkinson and Ramsay MacDonald (Image 5.1) during a nationwide campaign. After planting an oak tree in the village, MacDonald opened a new Crittall factory in Witham in front

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[155] Martin Pugh, '"Class Traitors": Conservative Recruits to Labour, 1900-1930', *English Historical Review* 113:450 (1998), 38-60.
[156] *Chelmsford Chronicle* (23 April 1926); Workers' Union, Braintree branch (October 1926, MRC MSS.51/4/12); *Daily Mail* (17 April 1929).
[157] *Braintree and Witham Times* (17 March 1932).
[158] Braintree and District Trades Council (April 1925, MRC MSS.292/79B/5).

of 4,000 people and praised Valentine for championing meritocratic social mobility against the 'Tory feudal system.' 'He was not one of those old-fashioned people who came over with William the Conqueror', he claimed, but a champion of the working family. The event was covered in local papers and the nominally 'non-political' *Crittall Magazine*, which only added to Valentine's reputation as a man of the people.[159] Visits from other notables, usually accompanied by media attention, soon followed. From Field Marshal Edmund Allenby, who praised the firm's hiring of ex-servicemen, to local politicians, military personnel and even the Egyptian ambassador.[160] Their endorsements added to the company's social prestige and political power, and further projected its utopian credentials.

Image 5.1: Ellen Wilkinson and Ramsey MacDonald lay an oak tree at Silver End in February 1926. In the background, the frame of the first factory is visible (Image by Norman Harrison)

[159] *Chelmsford Chronicle* (26 February 1926); *Crittall Magazine* (March 1926).
[160] *Daily Mail* (22 September 1928); *Times* (24 September 1928); Essex Agricultural Society, Dinner Menu (June 1929, ERO T/P 527/1); *Braintree and Witham Times* (23 June 1932).

At Silver End, political power was reified as social control. Not only did Francis, Valentine and Dan Crittall hold legal power as Justices of the Peace, but Valentine and senior CMC management also assumed the leadership of the Silver End branch of the Labour Party.[161] Valentine founded the branch in November 1927 when still Maldon's parliamentary candidate and was appointed president. The branch undoubtedly extended the Crittall family's political power in the village for a time. As communist opponents put it in 1929: 'Crittalls is the Labour Party and the Labour Party is Crittalls.'[162] Everyday governance was passed to Harvey Wrate, a senior manager at Witham, and Robert Small, a company director (who lived in 'Wolverton').[163] Scotsman Small had been a Labour parliamentary candidate in Surrey previously, and was a lively member of the Silver End community, but also an angry, unpopular and formidable manager. The perfect man to hold the party in check.[164] Mostly, however, the family looked to appease all sides of the political spectrum by declaring the village 'non-political', while simultaneously implanting political apparatuses to ensure social control and ideological conformity. The *Braintree and Witham Times* was also supposedly 'non-political', but this unsurprisingly meant, in practice, that criticism of the company was censored. When a letter was published in the paper criticising the CMC in February 1930, Valentine scolded the editorial board.[165]

Unions were also tightly bound by this political enmeshment. The implementation of a closed shop union after May 1919 meant strike action was virtually impossible. The agreement ensured grievances were dealt with internally and the workforce was divided between the

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[161] *Braintree and Witham Times* (10 October 1930); *Crittall Bulletin* (May 1961, BM).
[162] London Council of Industrial Workers, *The London Worker* (August 1929, BM).
[163] Cuthbe records (1927-1929, ERO A8184); *Crittall Magazine* (May 1928); *Braintree and Witham Times* (10 January 1930).
[164] Cuthbe records (1931, ERO A8184).
[165] CMC, Board Minutes (February 1930).

Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Workers' Union (Transport and General Workers' Union after 1929) and the Brass and Metal Mechanics Union. Given all three (covering four factory sites) had to agree a strike before it could take place, co-ordinated action was made extremely difficult.[166] It is highly likely the company formed deliberately close relationships with shop stewards, as Valentine had done with the local Labour leadership. This was the charge made against the firm in August 1929 by the London Council of Industrial Workers, a short-lived communist body. The council claimed the arrangement meant union officials had effectively 'pledged to meet the requirements of capitalism.' The group took particular aim at the CMC for overseeing a system 'perfected for dealing with workers' through its financial enmeshment, welfare measures and, most powerfully, the directors' intimate dealings with the trade union leadership. It claimed the CMC's reputation for fair dealing was unfounded, and unions had been comprehensively and 'actively engaged in harnessing the whole working class to capitalist rationalisation.' Union leaders, especially the Workers' Union, were given 'spice' jobs at the firm for their 'collaboration' while agitators were dismissed, and all disputes were negotiated 'over the heads of the workers.' Without any serviceable ability to voice discontent, Braintree workers organised a 'stay-in strike' in July 1929 in opposition to wage cuts, resulting in the immediate dismissal of the leaders of the unofficial strike. Galvanised by members of the London Council of Industrial Workers, a full unofficial strike was subsequently called, but only 100 to 150 men supposedly attended, and strong opposition from union leaders meant the industrial action quickly failed.[167]

Accusations that some union officials and shop stewards were 'agents of capitalism' was bread-and-butter for communists, but it probably had some accuracy. Jim White, who worked as an

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[166] National Society of Metal Mechanics, CMC (1936, MRC MSS.101/M/3/2/22).
[167] London Council of Industrial Workers (1929-1930, MRC MSS.292/778.22/8); *London Worker* (August 1929).

operative at Witham for 34 years and expressed no political leanings, repeated the claim in 1983 to local historian Janet Gyford:

> The unions couldn't do much […] [leaders] sort of got well in with the management and if they got well in they'd say 'oh well, we get on all right we'll make you a foreman', which they did to one particular chap […] then they made him a manager. And that's how a lot of trade union chaps got started. They got well in with the management being a trade union secretary or whatever and then they got made a foreman.[168]

It is unlikely this claim had no basis at all, and at the very least the short-lived strike in 1929 demonstrated some workers were willing to risk dismissal to pursue better wages and more democratic representation. Nevertheless, unionisation was a further (and ironic) method the CMC consolidated political and industrial control over its workforce, and given the closed shop one that also affected every employee. Those who embraced the ideal of unity of class interests were rewarded: dissent was illegitimate and swiftly eradicated.

Although Tomas Bata outright rejected unionisation, he did adopt a similar approach to the political enmeshment of his workforce. He had, as his biographer noted, 'an irresistible need to influence all aspects' of the lives of his workers.[169] As mayor of Zlín he all but privatised the city's government. When he died in 1932 company director Dominik Cipera assumed the mayoralty, by which time the company owned 1,500 houses in Zlín.[170] Unqualified political and economic control meant the company could 'completely determine the behaviour of its workers', as Tomas Kasper and Dana Kasperova argued, and disseminate a corporate consciousness that placed the company at the centre of private and public life.[171] With

[168] Jim White interviewed by Janet Gyford (8 February 1983, https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 2 January 2020).
[169] Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 224.
[170] Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 53-60.
[171] Kasper and Kasperova, 'Bata Company in Zlín', 328; Marek and Strobach, 'Identity, Discipline and Order', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 52.

surveillance came incentives and discipline. 'People with dirty character cannot do clean work', Tomas maintained, and therefore the private conduct of workers often determined economic opportunities: if an employee's personal life was considered 'tainted' they could be dismissed, demoted, investigated or punished.[172] This dictatorial style of management was extended by Jan Bata, who openly wished to organise employees' lives down to the second.[173]

Although the Bata enterprise was unable to establish this level of political hegemony in Britain, it nonetheless pursued a similar policy of political enmeshment. Firstly, unionisation was strongly resisted as British Bata sought to create an environment akin to Zlín, where, as Thomas Bata later wrote, 'people would neither need nor want unions.' The company claimed East Tilbury's utopian environment meant unions were simply obsolete. 'A utopian state of perfect harmony' was pursued and achieved, Thomas later wrote, where 'there was very little the union could offer over and above what the workers already had.'[174] Secondly, all the firm's foreign 'colonies' were deliberately placed in economically depressed areas with no established footwear industry, which gave Bata immediate leverage with local elites. The problem in Britain was Bata's expansion was strongly opposed by both the Federated Association of Boot and Shoe Manufacturers *and* the National Union of Boot and Shoe Manufacturers, on the grounds it was 'shoe dumping' (flooding the market with cheap shoes) and fell short of industry agreements on conditions and pay. While the firm was able to settle

[172] Quoted in Pavitt, 'The Bata Project', 36. Marek and Strobach, 'Identity, Discipline and Order', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 53-55.
[173] Zachary Doleshal, 'Imagining Bata in the World of Tomorrow: the 1939-40 New York World's Fair' in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 65-70.
[174] Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 275-85.

in Britain, it faced ongoing battles with the government, which was pressured by British shoemakers and MPs.[175]

With little sway in parliament, the firm enlisted Edward Spears, Conservative MP for Carlisle (a town known for its proud 'anti-socialist' council) as its chairman in November 1935.[176] An aristocrat, First World War veteran and well-known champion of Czechoslovakia, Spears added legitimacy and support for the firm in national politics. His appointment was a coup for the company, not only because he reportedly owned less than 5% of British Bata, but because his political connections were invaluable to its operating in Britain and its empire, and he helped convince a suspicious British public of Bata's credibility by 'draping the company in the Union Jack', as Thomas Bata later put it.[177] He was, as John Tusa (the son of the second managing director) put it, 'phenomenally well-connected' and respected.[178] Spears quickly embraced Bata's utopian philosophy, and declared Zlín cleaner, happier and more beautiful than English cities. He was joined on the board by Liberal MP Sir Frederick Whyte in July 1938, further cementing national political ties.[179]

Local political enmeshment was more extensive. Spears played a role in this too, by hosting various (usually right-wing) MPs in East Tilbury, but also through his presidency of the British Legion branch, ceremonial functions, and the reproduction of his writings in the *Bata Record*.[180] To build regional support for the firm, it invited leading local councillors and right-wing political associations to tour the model village, and published positive comments.[181]

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[175] TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1); House of Commons 279 (20 June 1933, https://hansard.parliament.uk/). Discussed in chapter five.
[176] *Bata Record* (22 November 1935).
[177] TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1); Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 95, 165.
[178] John Tusa, *Making a Noise* (Orion, 2018), 7.
[179] *Bata Record* (20 September 1935, 14 August 1936, 22 July 1938).
[180] *Ibid* (31 July 1936, 15 January, 23 April, 18 June 1937, 22 July 1938).
[181] *Ibid* (7, 13 July 1934, 29 May 1936, 19 March 1937).

Established elites were courted for support, such as William Wilson, the farmer who had sold the estate to the company, who was charged with running Bata's market garden.[182] An East Tilbury vicar was sent to Zlín in 1933 and praised the firm for combatting 'hopelessness and dismay' in *The Times*, a liberator narrative repeated by other local figures in the media.[183] Conservative MP for South East Essex, Victor Raikes, lauded the colony and was appointed president of Bata Football Club. Meanwhile, local Conservative Party branches held dinners in Community House.[184] Essex Alderman Alfred Books was equally integrated, becoming the president of the table tennis club and supervising sports club social evenings.[185]

The local district council was not immune to Bata influence either. Following the loss of its candidate (Joseph Wallis, foreman at Bata) in elections to the newly formed Thurrock Urban District Council in 1936, the firm quickly formed strong links with the winner, retired auditor John Fisher of the Ratepayers' Association. After founding its own branch of the Association soon after, led by 'Farmer' Wilson and *Bata Record* editor Bartram Savage, they invited the diminutive Fisher to chair its meetings. As only ratepayers could attend, this immediately limited political engagement and stifled potential dissent. Fisher quickly became integral to British Bata and was so absorbed by the firm that one councillor gave him the disparaging title 'Honorary Member for Bata's.' There was truth to the comment, as Fisher enthusiastically pursued Bata's agenda. As the firm paid local rates on residents' behalf, he consistently challenged rate rises, pushed the council to loan Bata money for housebuilding, and defended the firm's practices. When the council deemed housing conditions in East Tilbury hostels overcrowded in August 1936, Fisher voted to permit the conditions to continue, which was

[182] *Times* (29 January 1932).
[183] *Ibid* (18 July 1933); *Bata Record* (19 October, 3 August 1934).
[184] *Bata Record* (16 November 1934, 4 October 1935, 3 April 1936).
[185] *Ibid* (6 July, 4 October 1935, 3 January 1936).

rejected. In March 1937, the enterprise entertained a sceptical council to a dinner at Community House designed to strengthen political ties, hosted by Thomas Bata, Edward Spears and Alfred Brooks. During it, Spears urged the council to reduce rates and claimed Bata was at the forefront of the 'industrial evolution' of the Essex marshland by economically liberating its citizens.[186] Thus, political enmeshment not only added vital public legitimacy but also provided another vehicle to promote its ideology. At a national level, the firm was quick to secure voices of support for its practices, and at a local level smothered any potential avenues of political resistance to its idealistic liberalism.

Education was another means the ideological apparatuses of everyday life could be tied to corporate consciousness. Of course, educating employees was an everyday practice on the shop floor, in the office, or through the companies' control of the media and recreation (including libraries). But educational programmes were also formalised. Valentine Crittall, having told the press in 1925 that Essex was the 'worst educated county in Great Britain […] no knowledge of the requirements of the industries of the district', set about rectifying this failure.[187] Starting that year the CMC offered employees evening classes in technical and business subjects. In 1926 this was extended to women and girls, and an apprenticeship system also started. Mathematics, accountancy and 'salesmanship' lessons were soon launched, and a year later extended to cover industrial welfare, typing and languages.[188] As with welfare, the company expected to 'reap the benefits of their expenditure' as (almost exclusively male) employees 'broadened their usefulness', and by encouraging the ambitious to move up the ranks and set an example to others. Entrepreneurialism, self-improvement, loyalty and a desire

[186] *Ibid* (March 1936-February 1938).
[187] *Daily Mail* (31 October 1925).
[188] *Crittall Magazine* (March, June 1925, April, September, October 1926, February, October 1927).

for social mobility were all idolised. Scientific subjects were particularly encouraged as the key to human 'progress', while *The Crittall Magazine* urged readers to be 'mentally and physically alive […] [to] realise their ambitions.'[189]

At Silver End, this educational enmeshment was greatly extended. Of course, various organisations overseen or led by the Crittall family in the village had an educational impact by hosting regular classes, activities and lectures. These were supplemented by the village library and the Manors 'museum.' While the company did not formally educate the village youth, unlike in East Tilbury, it was deeply entangled, nonetheless. Before Silver End County School was opened in April 1929 – a single-storey building accommodating 320 pupils – the company had temporarily leased three rooms in the village hall.[190] Governance of the school was controlled by the Crittall family, with Ellen and wives of senior bosses appointed as managers. Hilda Crittall (Dan's wife) and Eric Rowe (Ellen's nephew) later joined the board. The Crittalls' paternalistic eye naturally fell over the school, with inspections, talks and essay prizes: Hilda would award the House Cup at the end of term and Ellen would present sports day prizes.[191] Ellen also chaired the Parents' Association, formed in 1930, while the village hall was used to host Women's Institute conferences on infant welfare and education. As vice-presidents of the Braintree and District Schools' Association, Francis and Valentine Crittall held music festivals in the hall, too.[192]

Worker-residents at Silver End also enjoyed extensive company education, on top of classes running in Braintree. Lectures and debates in the village hall followed a similar script, covering

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[189] *Ibid* (November 1925, April 1926, July, October 1927, October 1928).
[190] SEDC, Board Minutes (August 1927).
[191] Silver End County School Minutes 1928-1948 (ERO E/MM 98/1); *Braintree and Witham Times* (26 August 1931, 27 July 1933).
[192] *Braintree and Witham Times* (10 January, 28 March 1930, 23 June 1933, 27 June 1935).

topics such as dental hygiene, sport, gardening, business, parenting and architecture, and were sometimes chaired by a Crittall family member. They were morally instructing but nominally apolitical.[193] The short-lived *Silver End Monthly* took a similarly tone, promoting thrift (in order to sell Crittall savings schemes), the nutrition of eggs (to sell the 3,000 produced on company farms each week), the joys of gardening (Silver End horticultural supplies) and care of the feet ('Silver End Foot Dusting Powder').[194] At its most mundane, education at Silver End was an extension of paternalism, but at an ideological level it reinforced the belief that 'productive' recreations were needed to steer workers away from pubs and political meetings. Classes deliberately appealed to the young, ambitious and supposedly soon-to-be socially mobile.

Tomas Bata was not a man of letters, but he identified education as an indispensable method for transforming society. It was through education Tomas believed he could internalise in his workforce a corporate consciousness, epitomised in the entrepreneurial, competitive, self-improving and profoundly devoted 'Bataman.' Its chief aim was to change attitudes, as Tomas Kasper and Dana Kasperova have argued, by converting agricultural workers into disciplined, materialistic and uncritical citizens who embraced Bata's vision of a technologically driven utopian world.[195] The extensive range of educational programmes available in Zlín from the early 1930s were aimed at improving production, and by the early 1930s the firm also owned business and flying schools.[196] These classes provided additional platforms for Tomas to spread his ideals. As an educational reformer, he told audiences that state education should be geared towards improving industrial efficiency and entrepreneurialism. He argued schools should be

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[193] SEDC, Board Minutes (January 1928); *Crittall Magazine* (November 1928); *Silver End Monthly* (February-March 1929); *Braintree and Witham Times* (16 January, 20 March 1931, 7 December 1933).
[194] *Silver End Monthly* (February-March 1929).
[195] Kasper and Kasperova, 'Bata Company in Zlín', 328-47; Marek and Strobach, 'Identity, Discipline and Order', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 54-58.
[196] Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 372; Meller, *European Cities*, 139.

fully marketised, with teachers being paid by results, and the curriculum should align every student with a local business to 'create economic values.'[197] Tomas believed parents should form 'economic contracts' with boys as young as six (not girls), as he had done with Thomas, teaching them to maintain private property and earn money. These opinions were regularly printed in the *Bata Record* for British audiences, where he hailed this system as establishing a new 'mode of life.'[198] Although this capitalist utopian vision for national schooling was rejected by the Czechoslovak government, it did form the basis of his company's education programme.[199]

This model was transferred to East Tilbury, where boys were also taught to be businessmen. As at Zlín, there were an extensive variety of less formal ways workforces were disciplined and directed, including through sport, recreation, welfare, films (Bata had its own studio in Zlín from 1936), print media, radio and public celebrations. Before the Second World War, workers were given an opportunity to attend language classes, or join debating societies, and a private Bata primary school was opened in 1939 where children would test new shoes for the company.[200] The thrust of British Bata's educational programme, however, was its School for Young Men (discussed in chapter two). In September 1932, British Bata recruited 30 non-smoking, teetotal boys aged 14 or 15 to join its three-year programme in Zlín, then teaching around 1,600 to become managers and the flagbearers for Bata's corporate consciousness. By 1937, British Bata recruited a further cohort along with shorter three- to six-month placements for older boys in Zlín.[201] For Tomas, who demanded students lived under an 'economic code of

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[197] Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 96-101; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 271-74.
[198] *Bata Record* (5 June, 25 July 1936); Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 50, 72, 102-3; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 286-92.
[199] Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 60-63.
[200] *Bata Record* (22 January, 5 February 1937); BHC, 'Irene Bailey's Memories' (https://www.bataheritagecentre.org.uk/bata-memories/, accessed 14 November 2019).
[201] *Daily Herald* (17 September 1932); *Bata Record* (23 July 1937).

morals', this was the ultimate expression of his social engineering. The aim was to create in these poor boys archetypes of his capitalist utopianism: socially mobile, hardworking, disciplined and unquestioningly loyal employees, whose education deliberately eschewed critical debate or thinking.[202] Even Antony Cekota, who designed the curriculum and taught in Zlín and East Tilbury, admitted teaching methods were 'crude' as boys were taught to think like 'individual business corporations' with centrally planned achievement targets.[203]

A branch of the School for Young Men was opened at East Tilbury in early 1935. As in Zlín, these boys worked full-time in the factory and attended classes at night, and usually came from poor local families or 'depressed' areas of Britain. The firm, which had housed the initial 21 boys in its modernistic hostel, ran the school with military discipline (while absurdly claiming to promote autonomy and independence). The boys would rise at 6am, wash, strip and remake their beds, work from 7.30am until 5pm with an hour for lunch and a ten-minute morning break, attend compulsory classes (for example, on shoe polish) and were asleep by 9.30pm. Alcohol, gambling and shouting were strictly forbidden under threat of expulsion, while dormitories were inspected twice a week for cleanliness. 'Free' time was rigidly controlled, with the boys expected to take part in organised recreation. The firm also largely controlled of their bank accounts, demanding they saved as much as possible and only allowing withdrawals for 'reasonable expenditure.'[204] Costs for meals, accommodation, food and washing fees were taken directly from wages, and ever-present personnel cards recorded positive behaviour and transgressions.[205] With the completion of a second hostel and Community House the number

[202] Devinat, 'Bata System', 167-69; Kasper and Kasperova, 'Bata Company in Zlín', 336-47.
[203] Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 279-84.
[204] *Bata Record* (8 March 1935); Thurrock Juvenile Unemployment Committee, Minutes 1925-1939 (ERO D/Z 59/1); TUC, British Bata Dispute 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3).
[205] Devinat, 'Bata System', 166; Kasper and Kasperova, 'Bata Company in Zlín', 336-42.

of juveniles soon expanded, and in October 1936 a (much smaller) Bata School for Young Women was also opened.[206]

Educational enmeshment, like politics, was therefore another crucial vehicle for promoting corporate consciousness, capitalist utopianism and replicating gender norms. Not only did these companies stifle potential avenues of dissent but also aimed to indoctrinate the next generation of workers and propel an idealised vision of capitalism to suit corporate needs. This utopianism was based on the promise of unlimited and meritocratic social mobility provided workers (often juveniles) internalised company values and unquestioningly enmeshed themselves into the corporation. It was an ideology that largely excluded women, girls and older people. Education allied with other forms of enmeshment to form a near-impenetrable hegemonic layering of 'utopian' society, which championed liberty and social justice while offering little, if any, democratic influence. Classes were engineered to reinforce liberal capitalist utopianism and fetishise technological progress. 'They are capitalists', the *Bata Record* smugly told its readers of the hostel boys, 'and we are proud of them.'[207]

Corporate Consciousness and 'Embourgeoisement'

In many ways, life in these villages mirrored academic debates over 'embourgeoisement' that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. Led by the likes of sociologists Peter Willmott and Michael Young, whose controversial study *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957) compared communities in Bethnal Green and 'Greenleigh' (Debden, Essex), they argued the rehousing of families from 'traditional' slums in East London to suburban council estates led to the erosion of working-class solidarity and consciousness, and the adoption of middle-class values, dress,

[206] *Bata Record* (23 October 1936); Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 49.
[207] *Bata Record* (10 July 1936).

language and lifestyles. Young and Willmott, and other sociologists with middle-class romanticism over slum life, maintained this relocation to affluent, modern and atomised housing resulted in the severing of 'deep-lying' kinship networks and community ties, more private lifestyles, a competitive consumption with neighbours and more individualistic and aspirational attitudes.[208] While these findings were challenged and continue to be critiqued, we can nevertheless see at East Tilbury and Silver End an attempt to 'live individually' and cultivate many of these bourgeois features.[209] Their success will be discussed in the next chapter, but these villages also replicated a milieu in which 'traditional' working-class families, severed from kinship networks, lived in housing that emulated middle-class living. The companies also actively endorsed a worldview that embraced many middle-class value systems, from socially conservative gender relations, roles and institutions to the promotion of consumerism, entrepreneurialism, social mobility, management of 'private' property, individual competition, financial prudence and adoration for 'captains of industry.' Unlike municipal suburbs, however, these carefully engineered environments *did* deliberately intend to undermine working-class solidarity that threatened corporate consciousness.

The case for embourgeoisement, however, was not just a post-war phenomenon. The great suburbanisation of English society between the wars was equally satirised for fostering snobbish attitudes and petty middle-class concerns. While most suburbs were privately built and intended for the lower-middle and middle classes, vast municipal working-class suburbs like the London County Council's 25,039 dwellings in Becontree (the largest public housing

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[208] Young and Willmott, *Kinship in East London*; Young, *Family and Class in a London Suburb* (Routledge, 1960); Ferdynand Zweig, *The Worker in an Affluent Society* (Heinemann, 1961).

[209] John Goldthorpe *at al., The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969); Jon Lawrence*, Me, Me, Me? Individualism and the Search for Community in Post-War England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2019); John Rule, 'Time, affluence and private leisure: the British working class in the 1950s and 1960s', *Labour History Review* 66:2 (2001), 223-42.

estate in the world when completed in 1934) were also built.[210] In 1935, the *Daily Express* approvingly labelled this phenomenon 'a new consciousness of home-making': the era of the professional housewife, hire-purchase and privacy in suburbia. This was an idyllic vision that proved enduringly popular and was supported by interwar architects and town planners such as Richard Reiss, who had worked for the Ministry of Reconstruction and helped design Silver End.[211] The effect of suburbanisation on upper-working class and lower-middle class residents was portrayed similarly to post-war 'embourgeoisement', as seen in George Orwell's grumbling protagonist George Bowling in *Coming Up for Air* (1939). Suburbanites were 'the boss's devoted slaves for ever', so Bowling groused, 'we're respectable householders, that's to say Tories, yes-men and bum-suckers […] [we] would die on the field of battle to save this country from Bolshevism.' Fear of the loss of a suburban semi was thought to breed excessive conformity.[212]

A similar argument can be made for the sprawling interwar municipal suburbs of largely semi-detached houses, but the extent of 'embourgeoisement' and social control in these estates was minimal. While they were thought to be morally and materially improving – a mirroring of middle-class suburbia – it is highly unlikely that residents embraced middle-class value systems. As Andrzej Olechnowicz and Paul Johnson have argued, the precarious nature of working-class income, coupled with the higher costs of commuting and furnishing suburban houses, meant there was no financial margin to 'status seek' through consumption.[213] Similarly, Olechnowicz maintained that the one-class nature of interwar municipal estates like Becontree and the hostile, class-centred nature of local politics increased class antagonism and 'probably

[210] Broughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 42-46; Olechnowicz, *Becontree Estate*, 2.
[211] Quoted in Burnett, *Social Housing*, 249-61. Suggs-Ryan, *Ideal Homes*, 18-37.
[212] Orwell, George, *Coming Up For Air* (Penguin, 1991), 13.
[213] Olechnowicz, *Becontree Estate*, 125-36, 231-36; Johnson, *Saving and Spending*.

radicalised many of the working class.' Unlike at Silver End and East Tilbury, where conformity was impressed on residents, social control in municipal estates was often light-handed and permissive. Although tenancy agreements were similar – in banning subletting, maintaining gardens, restricting pets and livestock – these rules were habitually, openly and knowingly broken. Home visits were rare, enforcement was lenient, rule breaking was overlooked, privacy was respected, and tenants reported great satisfaction at the management of the estate. Evictions were uncommon, payments were flexible and rent arrears could be considerable.[214]

The ability to live largely anonymous, free and flexible lives was not possible in the company 'utopias': East Tilbury and Silver End were designed to engineer conformity. As Theresa Adamski has argued, the housing homogeneity, chequerboard housing patterns, side entrances and the prohibition of garden fences or shrubbery at Bata settlements ensured unbroken lines of sight, which restricted privacy and anonymity. This collective panopticism altered social habits and stabilised hierarchies, while regular house inspections reinforced the need for high domestic standards under threat of homelessness and unemployment. At East Tilbury, managers' houses were placed at the ends of streets giving them clear visibility of the surrounding roads, and side fences were also forbidden, although the chequerboard pattern was abandoned after 1935.[215] Francis Crittall's commanding view of the whole village from 'Manors' performed a similar function. If George Bowling had viewed mortgages as an 'illusion' of home ownership and independence, these company villages propelled this fantasy. British Bata maintained ownership of all East Tilbury property but demanded worker-residents thought of them as their own; an illusion of ownership aligned to the firm's belief that property ownership was educational. This was the reason Jan Bata rejected, in 1934, a series of high-

[214] Olechnowicz, *Becontree Estate*, 43-48, 101-114.
[215] Adamski, 'Bata's Zlín', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 221-48.

rise flats for Bata settlements designed by Le Corbusier, believing they would undermine Bata's corporate consciousness. The categorisation of low-density garden cities as 'bourgeois' by Soviet Russia and the popularity of multi-storey housing schemes by socialist governments in central Europe (like Vienna's monumental Karl Marx-Hof) only furthered this belief. The latter was seen to promote communal living in line with socialism.[216] Silver End residents, meanwhile, were offered the chance to purchase their houses over the course of a 20-year period, but although some starting the scheme few (if any) manged to buy their houses before the estate was sold to Witham Urban District Council in 1968.[217]

If the built environment was meant to strengthen 'bourgeois' individualism, it was also engineered for cohesiveness. Like Orwell's identical 'Ellesmere Road' and Becontree's uniformity (despite using 91 different architectural styles), individualism in suburbia often fell short of the mark. This was also the case at East Tilbury and Silver End, where housing was designed to project a sense of collective unity and solidarity. Relative architectural homogeneity was another method companies promoted corporate consciousness: a workers' house, like employment, free time and financial security, was another method of integrating residents into the company 'family' and helped them incorporate their employer into their sense of identity. For Reiss, Silver End was 'a new place not tired by traditional cliques and sets' and a centre for 'cooperation and a more active social life.'[218] At East Tilbury, a competition to name the village (which was never acted upon) attracted 40 nominations, 31 of which contained the words Bata, Zlín or shoe. Even as class inequalities were inscribed into the urban and social landscapes, it was clear that these diverse communities of 'collaborators' were

[216] Meller, *European Cities*, 126-31.
[217] *Crittall Magazine* (March 1926); CMC, Purchase of Silver End (1968, BM).
[218] *Crittall Magazine* (December 1925).

meant to be united 'regardless of clean collars or soot-begrimed faces.'[219] At the centre of all this, relentlessly shaping and disciplining residents' lives, was their work. It was in work that *men* found their value and exercised their highest ideals, so both firms argued, and derived their greatest source of pride. It was their 'life's work', and therefore employees and their families were asked to devote their whole lives to this 'modern church.'[220] On the one hand, East Tilbury and Silver End were the embodiment of this suburban 'embourgeoisement', but on the other they attempted to forge a collective consciousness that would ensure the supremacy of capitalist utopian principles. There was, as managing director Victor Schmidt put it in 1937, 'no room for neutrals', but this belief was soon to be tested.[221]

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Schemes to create 'minor capitalists' were never a widespread practice in interwar Britain, so in this sense the Crittall and Bata enterprises were somewhat unique. What these firms did represent, however, was the highest form of capitalist utopianism in this period of political and economic turbulence. They took welfare capitalism, vertical integration and corporatisation much further than other companies by attempting to foster a collective consciousness that combined a 'bourgeois' philosophy of 'living individually.' Entrepreneurialism was to be encouraged, but only *within* the company: 'private vices, common good.' Financial enmeshment acted as a human extension of integrated chains of supply, production and distribution, with worker-residents also incorporated into company brands. And with it, these firms supposedly aimed to turn the manual working class into capitalists through a variety of schemes that financially bound their workforces to the fate of the company. Any 'spontaneous

[219] *Bata Record* (November 1934).
[220] *Crittall Magazine* (October 1925); *Bata Record* (3 August 1934); Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 60.
[221] *Bata Record* (9 December 1937).

consent' the political economy might hold was intended to be surpassed by a spontaneous ardour.

Capitalism was professed to be a 'mutual relationship', as Jan Bata claimed, where companies acted as 'living organisms' united through shared interests and prosperity.[222] But while the political economy was presented as a wholly natural state of affairs, there is no doubting these were meticulously and comprehensively engineered environments. There was little chance of genuine autonomy in such an environment, and certainly not financial independence. An 'esprit-de-firm' was pursued that gave workers and residents a sense of belonging, in the hope they would also espouse ideological unity.[223] While Tomas and Jan Bata had openly aimed to 'change the mentality' of their employees and shape their consciousness, the CMC was more subtle and less authoritarian, but nonetheless shared much of this vision.

Where other philosophies or ideologies placed the state, commune, political party, feudal manor or religious institution as the basic unit of modern society, these firms set out to make the company the basis of social organisation. In the late 1930s, Jan Bata predicted nationalism would eventually fade and society would be formed of self-governing companies.[224] But the claim workers were genuine capitalists – part-owners in these businesses and active participants – was, of course, never true. This panopticism of surveillance and control meant resistance was almost inevitable. Neither workforce was ever truly 'emancipated', and as the 1930s progressed Jan's assertion that every employee must fully 'subordinate himself to collaboration' was to be significantly challenged.[225]

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[222] *Ibid* (4 January 1935).
[223] Industrial Welfare Society, *A Pamphlet Indicating the Scope of Welfare Work* (1921).
[224] Doleshal, 'Bata in the World of Tomorrow' in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 66.
[225] *Bata Record* (15 June 1934, 22 February 1935).

Chapter Five – False Starts and Failure: The Dismantling of Capitalist Utopianism

The perception these villages truly were 'utopias' has endured, with little written to dispute this belief. When interviewing residents of Silver End in the mid-1990s, Susan King found the historical consciousness of the village varied little from the 'mythical construct' presented in Francis Crittall's autobiography *Fifty Years of Work and Play* (1934), a narrative repeated in the local company-owned press and widely read by residents. As Catherine Jackson, the wife of a Silver End worker who still lived in the village told her, 'he tried to build a heaven on earth, and he jolly well did it.' This was a stronger position than most of King's 20 interviewees took, but nearly all shared the opinion that Francis was a man of the people, a commoner who had transformed himself into a captain of industry and cared deeply for his workforce. Many remembered the family fondly, praised their paternalism and integrity, and stressed the spirit of unity in the village. Yet the construction of social memory, as outlined in the introduction, is not an egalitarian act of participation, and public representations of the past are shaped by dominant narratives that are usually formed by those in power to serve their interests. Putting aside King's limited study and the heavily skewed sample of interviewees – most had been children in the interwar period, three-quarters still lived in the village, and some were Crittall family members – the rose-tinted vision of the village outlined in Francis' autobiography appears to have been internalised by many in the community, and was reinforced by subsequent publications like David Blake's company-funded *Window Vision* (1989). King was aware her interviews only presented a partial history of interwar Silver End, and the 'hegemonic' control the company held over residents had helped 'construct' its social memory. Those who dissented were in a minority: most accepted it as 'a vision of utopia.'[1]

[1] King, *Guv'nor's Village*.

This problem also presents itself at East Tilbury. While there has been less research undertaken on the village, the image of Bata's arcadia on the Essex marshes has been shaped by the company's omniscient role in residents' lives. The only lengthy study of East Tilbury was undertaken by a sociology undergraduate in the early 1960s, Angela Rumsey, and was published as a glowing account of British Bata and life in the village. Rumsey – daughter of East-Tilbury resident, Bata Sports Club chairman and senior manager Ernest Rumsey – also interviewed residents and supported the company's self-perception as a benevolent, high-paying firm that provided good working and living conditions. Rumsey's account lacked critical interrogation and maintained that thanks to the self-made brilliance and foresight of Tomas Bata, who had liberated the region from poverty, East Tilbury was a place of 'warmth and happiness' even if many locals had a 'fear of "1984" about the estate.' In fact, her major criticism was that the firm was too benevolent, which led to a 'lack of social responsibility' and an overdependency on the company.[2] Similarly, written recollections on the Bata Heritage Centre's website also generally applaud life in the company settlement, particularly for bringing jobs to south Essex, but also suffers from a small sample size of enthusiastic residents who were typically children in the mid-twentieth-century.[3] A large body of pro-Bata English-language literature also exists, primarily written by leading figures in the company.[4] East Tilbury was used as the utopian backdrop in Sue Wilsher's *When My Ship Comes In* (2016) too, although British Bata is renamed 'Monday's.' In contrast to the depictions of fully realised utopias presented in these texts and by the companies, this chapter will challenge these dominant narratives. Through use of company records, local newspapers, union and political

[2] Rumsey, *Bata Factory*.
[3] Bata Heritage Centre (BHC), Memories (https://www.bataheritagecentre.org.uk/bata-memories/, accessed 18 October 2019).
[4] For discussion, see Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 36-37.

archives, and several alternative oral histories, it will paint an image, to varying degrees, of autocratic control, dehumanising working conditions and corporate surveillance. It will highlight resistance to corporate autocracy, working-class agency and a strong desire for greater democratic control. The 'utopia' desired by these companies, which envisioned worker-residents as passive followers to be conditioned and instrumentalised, was never fully achieved.

The partial and gradual dismantling of these utopian projects highlights the contradictions and defects inherent within both capitalism and capitalist utopianism between the wars. At Silver End, the main catalyst for this disintegration was the impact of the Wall Street Crash in October 1929 and the subsequent slump. Not only did the crash illuminate Americans' poor faith in its business leaders but also the fallacy that effortless, endless enrichment on the stock market was possible.[5] The 'invisible hand' of private selfishness generated universal impoverishment, not opulence. Unregulated markets and speculation may have sparked the crash, but the dogmatic and global continuation of conventional liberal policies was ample kindling that enflamed the Great Depression and sounded the death knell for economic liberalism for half a century. While it is broadly accepted that political failings by the world's leading economies significantly exacerbated the situation, the Depression was undoubtedly fuelled by intrinsic economic flaws within liberal capitalism.[6] In the USA, the considerable inequality that had been generated throughout the 'roaring twenties' (in 1928 the top 1% of Americans owned 48% of net personal wealth) meant the economy heavily depended upon high-end consumer spending and investment, which rapidly dried up in the early 1930s. Corporate centralisation (occurring

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[5] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Great Crash of 1929* (New York: Mariner, 1997), 6-7, 125, 170-71.
[6] For example, see, *Ibid*, 140, 174-76; Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes,* 102-8; Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 114-15. On hegemonic stability theory, see Charles Kindleberger, *The World in Depression 1929-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Adam Tooze, *The Deluge* (Penguin, 2015).

to a lesser extent in Britain) also meant companies and trusts worked to curtail investment after the crash for debt repayment. The retrenchment of individual, corporate and public spending was coupled with higher borrowing costs and defaults on loans.[7] In Britain, the rigid class structure, reproduced through inheritance laws and the persistence of family capitalism, also prevented better economic performance.[8]

With liberalism globally discredited after 1929, its disintegration was complete by the early 1930s.[9] Britain's economy had already been weakened before the crash after Chancellor Winston Churchill, eager to return to the international stability of the pre-war years, unilaterally reintroduced the gold standard in 1925. The move favoured Britain's powerful finance industries but damaged its industrial exports: currency overvaluation reduced the country's competitiveness and cut growth and investment, causing job losses and wage reductions (sparking the 1926 General Strike). Despite this, successive governments clung to this symbol of the free-trading pre-war world until 1931.[10] The 'free' market soon gave way to an economic nationalism that flourished in most western nations and, with it, the death of 'the almost religious symbol of the old competitive capitalist society', free trade.[11] Increased tariffs and protectionist policies only deepened the crisis. Exports of manufactured goods fell by 20% worldwide between 1929 and 1937, and still stood at only 75% of 1913 levels in real terms in 1938.[12] International lending fell by 90% between 1929 and 1933.[13] In Britain, 'deglobalisation'

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[7] Galbraith, *Great Crash*, 174-87. For income distributions see the World Inequality Database (https://wid.world/country/usa/, accessed 17 March 2020).
[8] Tom Nicholas, 'Enterprise and Management', in Floud and Johnson (eds.), *Cambridge Economic History II*, 227-52.
[9] Boyce, *Capitalism at a Crossroads*, 332-369.
[10] C. Knick Harley, 'Trade, 1870-1939: from globalisation to fragmentation', in Floud and Johnson (eds.), *Cambridge Economic History II*, 161-189; Pugh, *State and Society*, 236-39.
[11] Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, 242-45.
[12] Harley, 'Trade, 1870-1939', in Floud and Johnson (eds.), *Cambridge Economic History II*, 162-64, 185.
[13] Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes,* 88.

was reluctantly pursued. The abandonment of the gold standard was followed by restrictions on trade. The 1932 Imports Duty Act imposed a 10% duty on all imported manufactured goods, but this soon rose to 20% and contributed to higher prices, persistent mass unemployment (although comparatively low at around 22% in 1932) and a reduction of exports. Although Britain fared better than other nations – it was the first major country to surpass 1929 production (at the end of 1934) and avoided the banking collapses experienced in Germany and the USA – these policies represented a remarkable transformation in economic thinking and fortunes.[14] Even Conservative MPs like Harold MacMillan called for economic planning and a large expansion of the state akin to Roosevelt's New Deal, something unthinkable in classical liberal doctrine.[15] In export-reliant Czechoslovakia industrial production fell by 40% between 1929 and 1933, by which time a quarter of the workforce were jobless.[16]

Britain was, of course, not immune to extremism either. The future of capitalism, if indeed it had a future, dominated the politics of the 1930s as the political economy was assaulted from both left and right. Most European nations turned rightwards by embracing economic nationalism: or a national capitalism that adopted state planning, limited competition and nationalisation to shield domestic production. This was, of course, most ardently felt in Germany where Nazism's triumphant anti-liberalism comprehensively dismantled the idea of the self-regulating economy.[17] In Britain, fascism was subdued but stronger economic nationalism attracted many otherwise moderate politicians and institutions, including, in 1934, Lord Rothermere's *Daily Mail* and *Sunday Dispatch*.[18] Communism, the other challenger to

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[14] Harley, 'Trade, 1870-1939', in Floud and Johnson (eds.), *Cambridge Economic History II*, 162-185; Kindleberger, *World in Depression*, 126-34, 240-41.
[15] Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes,* 96.
[16] Olivova, *Doomed Democracy*, 175-94.
[17] Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes,* 104, 117-35; Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 128-31.
[18] Pugh, *State and Society*, 281; Richard Thurlow, 'Failure of British Fascism', in Thorpe (ed.), *Failure of Political Extremism*, 70.

liberal capitalism's throne, received even less mainstream support but remained a constant presence because of Soviet Russia. Between 1929 and 1940 Soviet production at least tripled as Stalin boasted that 'it was no accident that the country in which Marxism has triumphed is now the only country in the world which knows no crises and no unemployment.' The western world was largely ignorant of its famines, forced labour and mass murder, and the likes of H.G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw and Sidney and Beatrice Webb visited and hailed its utopian triumphs.[19] Its stunning contrast to the fortunes of most capitalist nations, which seemed to have collapsed under the weight of their own economic contradictions, only added to this sense of uncertainty.

If the dismantling of the utopian project at Silver End was a victim of the crash and Depression, then East Tilbury was a response to it: seemingly the solution and continuation of liberal capitalism as it crumbled, one that maintained the liberal doctrine of limited state intervention but embraced economic (corporate) planning. While both companies aimed to perfect the political economy from the inside, neither village achieved self-sufficiency. Their apparent isolation was only geographical, not political or economic. Silver End became, for a time, not the answer to the hunger marches, soup kitchens, dole queues, political activism and hopelessness of the 1920s, but exemplified the heightening of these anti-utopian elements in the 1930s. If capitalism appeared close to collapse in this period, then so too did Silver End. In following the fates of these two companies and villages we can see not only the breakdown of social dreaming but its reimagining. They epitomised broader changes within Britain at the time, as they became rural epicentres of a shift towards a more democratic, egalitarian nation

[19] Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes,* 96; Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 124-28.

which started in the mid-1930s and saw its fullest expression a decade later, in the Labour Party's sweeping victory in the 1945 general election.

Liberty as Self-determination?

Although British Bata and the CMC liked to think of their experimental communities as spaces of individual liberty, independence and self-determination, modelled on their industrious and socially mobile business leaders, there is little to support this rhetoric. As outlined in the previous chapter, various forms of enmeshment significantly curtailed the freedom of residents. Welfare capitalism often gave only the illusion of security. The loss of a job not only meant the loss of income but also multiple forms of social security that families had invested in the firm: their house, healthcare, pensions, education and savings. This acted as insurance against disloyalty and conflict, and a source of compulsion and discipline. This could generate modern forms of debt peonage among the workforce, particularly at British Bata. The company's European opponents estimated that by Wednesday each week 65% of a workers' Friday wages had been returned to Bata through rents, its stores and other forms of financial enmeshment.[20] It was possibly even higher in East Tilbury. Union activists covertly entered the company 'compound' in 1937 and discovered that of the 15*s* to 17*s* paid each week to juvenile workers, around 70% was immediately paid back to British Bata.[21] After the CMC approved tenancy at Silver End following a 'careful investigation' into the family's 'suitability', residents had to seek permission to erect sheds, use nails or fix notices to fences. They were not allowed to take employment elsewhere. The company could enter the property at any 'reasonable

[20] Quoted in *Larne Times* (16 July 1932).
[21] National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives (NUBSO), Circulars 1937-1952 (Modern Record Centre (MRC), University of Warwick 547/D/2).

time' and charge the tenant for repairs, and breaking these rules or ceasing employment at the firm would result in a family's eviction with just seven days' notice.[22] At East Tilbury, Bata also implemented a similarly stringent tied-cottage policy, which demonstrators called 'feudal' and one journalist argued 'binds the employees to the company' to supress dissent.[23] In these respects, the villages bred conformity and homogeneity, not liberty and individuality.

Autocracy

Workers did not meet corporations as equals on the marketplace. Bata deliberately chose to settle in areas of high unemployment and poverty, where its wages, conditions and autocratic management would meet less resistance, and where it could frame itself as champions for the poor. If we put aside some foundational features of capitalism, like inequality and an operational need for unemployment (surplus labour), those impoverished families that apparently walked the length and breadth of England to reach these villages were certainly not free, equal and fully informed negotiators, as envisioned by classical liberal philosophers. Liberty for these employees and residents, including locals who had few job opportunities, often meant only the freedom to adapt to their rather powerless situation. These economic realities, as numerous scholars have argued, significantly undermine claims to 'freedom' within capitalist economies where economic liberty is grossly unequal, and power is disproportionately weighted to those who own productive property (monopolised in the villages). The liberty of those who owned economic capital often rested on the unfreedom of those who owned little. In these villages, this meant the undemocratic and systematic

[22] Silver End Development Company (SEDC), Board Minutes (October 1927, January 1928); Rent Book for 75 Valentine Way (1928); Rent Book for 26 Runnacles Street (1936, Silver End Heritage Society (SEHS)).
[23] MacEwen, *Bata Story*, 9-15.

disciplining (and self-disciplining) of the individual, under threat of destitution and homelessness.[24]

Although for some British journalists Zlín was the answer to Europe's woes during the early 1930s, others castigated the company town. 'In Zlín, there exists an autocracy able to control the lives of the workers from the day they are born until the day they are buried', *The Shoe and Leather Recorder* told its readers in 1935.[25] Bata's punitive fines, comprehensive control mechanisms and absolute authority were criticised in the *News Chronicle*, *Weekly Illustrated* and *The Times*. Even Conservative MP Victor Cazalet, who praised the firm on the BBC, accepted Tomas had been a 'dictator.'[26] A *New Statesman* reporter interviewed employees in Zlín and 'was told no worker ever expresses any political opinion […] those who expressed wrong opinions have long since left the works.'[27] Tomas sought 'homogeneity' in this workers, according to League of Nations official Paul Devinat, and commanded 'absolute authority' to ensure 'psychological unity.'[28] The *Yorkshire Post* claimed, just months before his purchase of East Tilbury, that he was an 'industrial dictator' whose management was 'antipathetic to our nature and notion of government.'[29] For the company's opponents, Bata imposed sophisticated forms of despotic exploitation that ensured whole communities were monitored, disciplined and conditioned into acting against their own interests.[30]

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[24] A very limited survey includes Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Aylesbury: Penguin, 1987); Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions*, 199-221; Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*; Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957).
[25] *Shoe and Leather Recorder* (12 December 1935).
[26] *The Times* (13 July 1932); *News Chronicle* (10 October 1935); *The Listener* (4 December 1935); *Weekly Illustrated* (18 April 1936).
[27] *New Statesman* (28 June 1935).
[28] Devinat, 'Bata System', 57-66.
[29] *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* (13 July 1932).
[30] Sevecek, 'Company Towns' in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 16-29.

If anything, this autocracy intensified under Tomas' successor, his half-brother Jan Bata. Like Tomas, Jan was politically ambitious and power-hungry, but he was also proud and conspicuous. Believing his workforce had no right to question him, he persistently stressed subordination was the most important quality in an employee. The 'worst workers', he wrote in the *Bata Record*, were those who were 'biased against me' and he was 'unable to influence.'[31] The former head of the BBC World Service, John Tusa, claimed his father – who moved to East Tilbury from Zlín in 1939 – had to seek Jan's permission to marry, and that life in the village left little room for individualism.[32] Jan believed the function of governments and companies should be indistinguishable, and therefore it was unsurprisingly the Trades Union Congress (TUC) privately warned that in Zlín 'the lives of the workers are literally controlled by Jan Bata,' and raised concerns about East Tilbury.[33] Laying aside the extensive surveillance network British Bata installed in the village, the internal running of the company was equally as undemocratic. The TUC claimed employees were continuously reminded 'to purchase anything they require' from the company, be that 'a postage stamp or a piano', and it would be deducted from their wages.[34] While a 'Management Advisory Committee' was formed in 1936 and claimed to offer workers a democratic voice, members were not elected but chosen from within the management of each workshop.[35]

There was little room to express grievances. Managing director Victor Schmidt warned against 'semi-secret grumbling' and asked employees to approach him directly for 'friendly consultations', but given his aggressive reputation, it is unsurprising few did. Schmidt did not

[31] *Bata Record* (15 June, 19 October 1934, 15 February 1935); Cekota, *Stormy Years*, 40-43.
[32] Tusa, *Making a Noise*, 3-10.
[33] TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1); Sevecek, 'Company Towns', 40-42.
[34] TUC, British Bata Dispute 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3).
[35] *Bata Record* (28 July 1937, 16 December 1938).

treat mistakes with kindness but usually with a hail of abuse (and shoes) during one of his notorious outbursts.[36] A suggestion box scheme followed in 1937, but many still feared reprisals for voicing concerns and Schmidt repeatedly attacked the 'cowardly' act of anonymising responses, which were 'completely disregarded.' The fact Schmidt felt the need to reassure workers they 'need not fear victimisation' probably strengthened any reticence.[37] This was understandable, given that sackings were frequent and often arbitrary. Those caught attending union meetings were dismissed, lateness was punished by immediate suspension and workers caught walking on gardens in East Tilbury were disciplined. Unions complained of systematic intimidation and bullying. Those leaving the factory site, which was described by one forewoman as akin to a prison, were routinely and thoroughly searched to prevent pilfering.[38] The firm expected unwavering compliance and deference – 'lots of "yes sirs"' as one former employee put it – and anonymity was restricted by timecards with compulsory photo identification.[39] This dictatorial management style was reinforced by the *Bata Record* editor, Arthur Bartram Savage, who argued some organisations 'need a dictator and not a committee. We feel an iron fist would keep a firmer hand on steering and perhaps a single line of vision.'[40] Unions were forced to hold meetings in the 'secret service atmosphere' of cramped houses.[41] Joan Keeble, who worked at East Tilbury between the wars, recalled the company even had her husband arrested in 1939 on the unfounded belief he was a fifth columnist.[42]

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[36] Tusa, *Making a Noise*, 12-13.
[37] *Bata Record* (31 July, 21 August 1936, 8 January, 18 June 1937, 3 June 1938, 20 January 1939).
[38] *Ibid* (22 March 1935, 20 January 1939); *Chelmsford Chronicle* (12 February 1937); NUBSO, Council Minutes (June 1938-May 1942, MCR 547/D/1/1); Interview with Mrs Bone (12 November 1985, Essex Record Office (ERO), Chelmsford, SA 3/404/1).
[39] *Bata Record* (October 1934); BHC, Jack Larkin Memories (https://www.bataheritagecentre.org.uk/bata-memories/, accessed 23 March 2020).
[40] *Bata Record* (13 July 1934, 22 May 1936).
[41] NUBSO, Council Minutes (February 1945, MCR 547/D/1/1).
[42] Interview with the Joan Keeble, Ron Chittock and Dorothy Dear (7 September 2010, ERO SA 13/7/4/1).

Suspicion and surveillance started before employment. Hopefuls had to complete an extensive application form that asked questions including 'Is your father a trade union member?' and 'What are your political views?' It read like a 'police record' according to the *New Statesman*; asking if they had any debts, how often they smoked and how they spent their spare time. The press received copies and castigated British Bata for acting like a 'feudal lord.'[43] In order to start, many also had to move to the estate, and it was common to be disciplined if your garden was poorly maintained. Joan James, who moved to East Tilbury from Hackney in 1940, argued the system meant they 'had to maintain standards' and were constantly 'watched over.'[44] Community House rules were just as rigorous into the 1960s. Residents were not allowed to move furniture, use cooking equipment or kettles (probably so they used the company canteen), and had to vacate within 24 hours of employment being terminated.[45] Privately, the TUC warned 'if this state of affairs should develop and spread it would mean the controlling of 99% of the life of the individual.' Walter Citrine, the general secretary of the TUC, simply claimed 'the workers were not economically free.'[46]

Bata's critics were particularly scathing of its treatment of juveniles. Some newspapers estimated 90% of its workforce was under 30 in Zlín in 1935, with 10% made up of girls under 18 working monotonous, dead-end jobs.[47] At East Tilbury, the TUC guessed 'most' were under 20 in 1937, and in the leather factory over 70% girls under 18.[48] Some, with few options, arrived from charities like Dr Barnardo's; this high proportion of juveniles alarmed numerous

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[43] *Daily Herald* (11 June 1934); *New Statesman* (2 February 1935); TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1).
[44] 'Welcome to Bata-ville', *The Guardian* (19 June 2006).
[45] Rumsey, *Bata Factory*; *Bata-ville: We Are Not Afraid of the Future* (film: Commissions East, 2005).
[46] TUC, Bata Dispute 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3).
[47] *News Chronicle* (10 October 1935).
[48] TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1); NUBSO, Council Minutes (July 1939, MCR 547/D/1/1).

politicians, who raised the issue in parliament.[49] Aside from marriage bars, segregated jobs reinforced (with the support of unions) the widely held prejudice that women were less 'skilled' and must perform jobs suited to their 'nature.' Where girls and boys performed similar roles, like those in the Bata hostels, they did not receive equal pay and unions fought for parity.[50] The technocratic, military-like regime imposed on young Bata hostel residents was also considered an afront to liberty. The National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives (NUBSO) described the children as 'very forlorn' and in a 'pitiful' state.[51] Even the local labour exchange recognised how miserable life was for young workers, and temporarily halted sending more from 'distressed' regions because of the 'over organisation' of their leisure hours and the rigid imposition of rules.'[52]

At Silver End the CMC was less heavy handed, but certainly not committed to democratic mechanisms. The sophisticated network of enmeshment in the village was almost as extensive as at East Tilbury, and on the factory floor the firm could be just as coercive. Silver End community leader and resident Robert Small, who was also Witham manager and a company director, struck fear into the workforce. Jim White, who joined the firm in 1929, recalled foremen being repeatedly 'bullied' by Small and his brother Andrew. The fear-inducing siblings were openly 'hated' by most workers for acting 'like kings' and stealthily watching them. 'They were terrors', according to Ruth Beardwell, who started in 1914 and worked there for over two decades. 'The discipline was very bad […] they were horrible people.'[53] In the early 1930s, Robert was known for quickening the pace of production, deteriorating working conditions and

[49] British Bata, Staff Register 1933-1952 (BHC); House of Commons 272 (29 June 1933) and 292 (19 July 1934, https://hansard.parliament.uk/).
[50] TUC, Bata Dispute 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3).
[51] NUBSO, Council Minutes (March 1937, MRC 547/D/1/1).
[52] Thurrock Juvenile Employment Committee (June 1938, ERO D/Z 59/1).
[53] Jim White (13 December 1991) and Ruth Beardwell (29 March 1985) interviewed by Janet Gyford (https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 1 November 2019).

firing indiscriminately.[54] The fact he was initially so prominent in Silver End social life and was the liaison between residents and the company did not make for a flourishing democratic spirit.[55] Similarly, Francis Crittall was well known for his fiery temper and meticulous standards.[56] Moreover, the restrictions on making changes to houses, internally and externally, frustrated many residents, especially the inability to put up wallpaper and the ban on hanging out washing on weekends because of visitors.[57] Meanwhile, the company reprimanded those caught 'abusing' the fixed-rate electricity charges by 'burning lights after midnight' and, like at East Tilbury, closely monitored the appearance of gardens.[58] Some of King's interviewees noted that 'you couldn't breathe without Crittalls' and they were 'a bit Victorian in their ways.' One argued 'it was a bit feudal […] everything was virtually self-contained; you didn't need to go out of the village.' Many families left because of isolation and trouble adjusting, but their stories are yet to be told.[59]

Instead, the CMC established sham democracies that offered some transparency over welfare issues but did little to empower its workforce to enact meaningful change. Committees for *The Crittall Magazine*, social club, tenant's association, village hall, community council and benevolent funds could only make 'suggestions' or 'recommendations' to the company, which it was free to ignore, and usually senior management chaired these boards and outnumbered elected members.[60] Ultimately, decisions always rested with the company. Take the case of the Crittall Employees Benefit Fund, a separate company claimed to have been owned by the

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[54] Fred Cook (6 September 1983) in *Ibid*.
[55] CMC, Board Minutes (May 1928, Braintree Museum (BM)).
[56] Ruth Beardwell interviewed by Janet Gyford (29 March 1985); King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 30, 48.
[57] Susan King, 'Silver End' (University of Essex seminar 1995, cassette 1142).
[58] SEDC, Board Minutes (April 1929).
[59] King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 30-31, 57-60, 89-103.
[60] *Crittall Magazine* (April, August 1925, October 1926, November 1927, May 1928); *Braintree and Witham Times* (2 March 1933).

workforce as an incentive to save and finance Silver End. Initially, the company had not imagined employees would have representation on the board, but after resistance it allowed elected members to sit, although nearly all voting shares were owned by the CMC.[61] Similarly, the Silver End Development Company had initially allowed an elected representative from the workforce to sit as a director and oversee the village's development, but he only attended the initial few meetings and took no role in decisions, which were almost always made by Francis.[62] While this was further than British Bata was willing to venture, it failed to provide any significant means of collective self-determination.

British Bata also liked to think of itself as a democratic, co-operative enterprise, but this was untrue. Tomas Bata publicly maintained the company was a co-operative, that his workers were fellow capitalists, and the *Bata Record* reminded readers there were no 'fat shareholders' in its 'thoroughly democratic concern.' The firm also appropriated the language of co-operation. Adverts emphasised that there were 'no middleman profits', and at the East Tilbury grocery store dividends were offered to customers.[63] This was disingenuous posturing. As Paul Devinat found in Zlín, while the workforce was fed a tale that they were in control, the technocratic firm ensured directors 'retain all managerial functions […] Bata's system is characterised by the total absence from mechanisms of bodies representative of workers.'[64] 'Collaborators' owned no shares or voting rights, unlike co-operatives. Even into the 1950s welfare committees were appointed at British Bata, not elected.[65] The CMC also boasted of a 'co-operation productive bonus scheme' that established no democratic oversight. Meanwhile,

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[61] Crittall Employees' Benefit Fund, Board Minutes 1927-1944 (BM).
[62] SEDC, Board Minutes 1925-1927 (BM).
[63] *Bata Record* (27 September 1935, 6 March, 26 June 1936, 16 April, 10 September 1937, 13 October 1939); Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 215.
[64] Devinat, 'Bata System', 185.
[65] British Bata, *Welfare Scheme* (1955, BHC).

the 'co-operative' department stores planned at Silver End never came to fruition. Although the stores offered customer dividends, Francis claimed it was more expensive to run as a co-operative and considered it impractical to run the stores and farms democratically, as 'you cannot farm by a committee.'[66]

Silver End and East Tilbury were not the only 'utopias' to systematically undermine democracy and community empowerment. As Alan March has demonstrated at Letchworth Garden City, where building began before the First World War, the functions of capitalist finance meant Ebenezer Howard's democratic socialist vision, which he prioritised over the physical features of the settlement, was never realised. The board of directors, made up of investors, cared little for Howard's democratic idealism and even removed him for inciting residents to demand self-government. The First Garden City Ltd. formed an 'exclusive and decisive form of governance' that held 'authoritarian powers' despite a flourishing of grassroots democratic organisations. Residents had virtually no say in the development or running of the town, even after the local council was formed in 1919, as private property rights superseded egalitarian ambitions: 'instead of being a peaceful alternative to capitalism, the Garden City became a device for its preservation.' The same situation existed at Welwyn, built after the war, where the development company allowed 'no local democratic control.'[67] Like the CMC, other interwar groups that claimed to make employees 'minor capitalists' also envisioned no employee voting rights, including at the Fordson Estate.[68] While some capitalist utopians incorporated democracy into their social dreaming, most argued in favour of a corporatocracy (see chapter

[66] *Crittall Magazine* (November 1927); Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 140-41, 157.
[67] March, 'Democratic dilemmas', 409-33.
[68] Fitzgerald, *Industrial Welfare,* 198-203; Kowol, 'Conservative Modernity', 800-02.

one). As such, formal political equality obscured inequalities of power and wealth, and democratic organisations that did exist were largely powerless.

To some extent, this corporate autocracy reflected broader efforts by some politicians and industries to reverse democratic progress. The 'utopian' capitalist experiment at Fordson Estate in Essex, for example, was also criticised as overly authoritarian because of its rigid paternalism and, like at East Tilbury, for its compulsory saving schemes that attempted (and failed) to promote entrepreneurialism in labourers.[69] The threat to democracy in the 1930s came not from the left, as it had done in the 1920s, but from the right, as in continental Europe. In Britain, this included not only fascists but the 'hard' right, in the form of fringe Conservative Party factions like the 'neo-Tories' and pro-feudal, pro-royalist groups such as English Mistery and English Array. The latter two called for a reformation along eugenic lines and a return to medieval power structures.[70] Neo-Tories on the other hand, sought to replace democracy with an authoritarian corporate state, and claimed a following of around 200 influential (mainly aristocratic) public figures. While their plans were broad and vague, these educated elites advocated a revolution from above: a patriarchal, Social Darwinian, anti-urban, anti-industrial, rigidly hierarchical polity that shared ground with fascism but favoured an absolute monarchy over the demagoguery of dictators.[71] Moreover, moderate right-wing reformers used the economic debates of the early 1930s to promote national planning through a centralised network of governing boards representing different industries. This 'industrial self-government', working to an economic master plan, was an 'explicitly capitalist' and ideological response to socialism and the failures of liberalism. Championed by industrial leaders,

[69] Kowol, 'Conservative Modernity', 800-2.
[70] Stone, *Breeding Superman*.
[71] Dietz, *Neo-Tories*.

Conservative politicians and some liberals, the legislation would have established a central industrial council made up of corporations, with unions and consumers forming consultative bodies at company level. While the legislation failed, partly in the face of forces opposing these authoritarian measures, the movement demonstrated that capitalist remodelling threatened hard-fought democratic gains.[72]

Social Mobility

At British Bata, 'democracy' eschewed genuine egalitarianism but was understood as a right enjoyed exclusively by socially mobile men, who, in a Social Darwinian sense, had come to earn their place at the table. In an interview with the *Bata Record*, Jan Bata claimed his organisation was a 'true democracy' as 'democracy gives every man equal chance to get the highest prizes.' This was repeated by British Bata chairman Edward Spears not long after: it was 'completely democratic […] a young fellow could aspire to any heights in the organisation.'[73] This was a limited, patriarchal interpretation of democracy, but the seduction of meritocratic social mobility was powerful. While improved national education was broadly accepted as a means of achieving this, the British education system failed to significantly widen access for working-class children between the wars, particularly girls. As Ross McKibbin has argued, only 25% of the population was educated beyond elementary school in interwar Britain, grammar schools heavily favoured the middle class, and independent schools continued to act as a barrier to meritocratic social mobility. While university access increased, it did not benefit the working class and played virtually no role in facilitating social mobility.[74] Universities particularly

[72] Daniel Ritschel, 'Corporatist Economy in Britain', 41-65. On Labour's economic planning see Richard Toye, *The Labour Party and the Planned Economy, 1931-1951* (Suffolk: Boydell, 2003).
[73] *Bata Record* (16 October 1936); *Grays and Tilbury Gazette* (3 March 1937).
[74] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures,* 208-10, 248-71. See also Peter Mandler, 'Educating the Nation III: Social Mobility', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 26 (2016), 1-23.

disadvantaged women, and the only opportunity for most to move socially was through marriage.[75] Interwar researchers like Alexander Carr-Saunders and David Caradog Jones argued education was a 'greasy pole' and not a ladder: rather than promoting meritocracy it reproduced class hierarchies. In examining what it would take to create a dynamic, stratified and professional society they argued that specialised vocational training was needed to 'reduce social injustice' and improve economic efficiency.[76] No wonder, then, businesses like British Bata and the CMC posed as a home for the ambitious. Many parents preferred to send their children to work and learn 'practical' skills than pay for secondary education.[77] Take Albert Fairbairn: head boy in his elementary school in Pitsea, he was offered a place at Brentwood Grammar School but was unable to attend, partly because of his family's impoverishment. Instead, he joined British Bata but, despairingly, claimed his subsequent achievements were 'practically nil.'[78]

Albert's potential was wasted, but this was the norm in interwar Britain. Although there have been few studies exploring social mobility in interwar Britain, most conclude it was a static society with very limited potential for relative upward mobility. Even the most positive study, Dudley Baines and Paul Johnson's analysis of occupational mobility in 26,915 working-class London households, found 49.8% of sons were in the same occupational category as their fathers. However, there were more job opportunities and unemployment was lower in London.[79] Most other scholars have been more pessimistic about the opportunities afforded

[75] Carol Dyhouse, 'Family Patterns of Social Mobility through Higher Education in England in the 1930s', *Journal of Social History* 34:4 (2001), 817-842.
[76] Chris Renwick, 'Movement, Space and Social Mobility in early and mid-Twentieth-Century Britain', *Cultural and Social History* 16:1 (2019), 18-20.
[77] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures,* 263.
[78] Interview with Albert Fairbairn (28 November 1985, ERO SA 3/410/1).
[79] Dudley Baines and Paul Johnson, 'In search of the 'traditional' working class: social mobility and occupational continuity in interwar London', *Economic History Review* 52:4 (1999), 692-713.

to the working class. Contemporary studies by the likes of Christopher Saunders found virtually no social mobility in Merseyside and this was supported by sociologists at the London School of Economics, who argued British society was not meritocratic nor economically efficient.[80] David Glass and J.R. Hall's classic 1954 study of interwar generational mobility concluded, too, that Britain offered little opportunity to socially climb.[81] While generational mobility between unskilled and skilled jobs increased in these years, Andrew Miles and Mike Savage maintained relative mobility from working- to middle-class occupations was rare.[82] Selina Todd noted, too, that the social background of women usually determined their employment prospects, which were highly circumscribed. Most jobs were sourced through kinship networks and nepotism, which undermined meritocratic employment.[83]

Historians have argued, too, that the working class had little appetite for social mobility or 'embourgeoisement', and often resisted this anti-egalitarian philosophy. It was not social mobility that motivated job seekers between the wars, Todd reasoned, but financial security. Seeking 'respectability' was not an attempt to emulate middle-class value systems but simply an effort to escape poverty and insecurity.[84] Home ownership has been interpreted in similar ways; but many homeowners maintained their working-class identity in contrast to 'embourgeoisement' theory.[85] Paul Johnson's study of working-class family finance supports this viewpoint. 'Respectability' was usually conspicuously consumed to enhance reputations

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[80] Renwick, 'Social Mobility', 21-22.
[81] David Glass and JR Hall, 'Social Mobility in Great Britain: A Study of Inter-Generation Changes in Status' in Glass (ed.), *Social Mobility in Britain* (Routledge, 1954), 177-217.
[82] Andrew Miles and Mike Savage, *The Remaking of the British Working Class 1840-1940* (Routledge, 2003), 30-40.
[83] Selina Todd, 'Poverty and Aspiration: Young Women's Entry to Employment in Interwar England', *Twentieth Century British History* 15:2 (2004), 119-142.
[84] *Ibid*, 137-41.
[85] Laura Beers and Geraint Thomas, 'Introduction' in Beers and Thomas (eds.), *Brave New World: Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building in Britain between the Wars* (IHR, 2011), 16-17; Olechnowicz, *Becontree Estate*, 125-36.

within the working class. Precarity meant average family savings were very small, at around £80, and savings accounts were generally used for short-term financial protection. Share ownership was very rare. According to Johnson and Richard Hoggart, thrift and independence were long-held working-class cultural characteristics.[86]

Those who attended grammar schools or gained promotion were routinely ostracised from their local communities. Ambition was discouraged on shop floors and office staff were usually thought of as snooty and allied with management: a vague anti-capitalist 'folk-Marxism' could exist, unaffiliated to party politics, that maintained physical labour was the source of value and office staff 'did nothing.'[87] Oral histories of CMC workers tend to support this view. Jim White stated that while some people moved up to foreman status after sitting exams, he 'never bothered' as:

> I was quite happy. I was a machine operator […] if you'd got a foreman's job, you'd got all the responsibility and the money was hardly any different […] It was a rotten job. They were bullied, you see they were bullied all the time.

Added responsibilities and the estrangement of friends stopped others accepting or pursuing promotion, too. Bill Carey, who also worked on a machine press at Witham after joining in 1920, claimed he 'didn't exactly want to be made foreman, as a matter of fact that was a sort of onerous job.' Management was generally disliked. Those who were promoted, such as Fred Cook who joined CMC aged 14 in 1930, found it a poisoned chalice. His position as a foreman at Witham meant he sided with the company during strikes and came into conflict with his former co-workers. Being part of the 'staff' simply meant 'you wouldn't get no friends at the works'; old friendships from school were no longer 'intimate.' Class divisions rarely meant

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[86] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (Chatto and Windus, 1957), 57-84; Johnson, *Saving and Spending*, 41-46, 72, 86, 124-25, 209-29.
[87] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures,* 131-42, 265.

friendships continued; as he simple put it, 'I work for the firm. They don't. They work for the union.'[88]

Fred Cook was probably a rare exception, however, as few moved socially at CMC. Even he admitted a class ceiling operated at the firm that limited mobility: most senior management positions were given to Crittall family members.[89] The CMC liked to profile those who had been promoted in *The Crittall Magazine*, or highlight how Francis Crittall and other directors were champions of meritocratic social mobility, but its doubtful many moved up the social strata. Others profiled for the paper told a different story, like Francis Harrington who had worked in the same machine shop for 40 years when interviewed in 1926, or mechanic 'Father' Edwards whose 10 children all worked at Crittalls in semi-skilled positions.[90] Nepotism probably prevented meritocratic hiring. Jim White argued that Andrew Small 'only got the job because his brother was a director' and 'in the old days it used to be "oh, he's a director's son, we'll make him assistant manager".' Ruth Beardwell maintained that most of her white-collar colleagues were 'sons of clergymen', while veteran operative George Hayes complained that despite wanting to make foreman, he was never offered a position and very few were. Most managers 'came from outside' and benefitted from 'the old school tie.'[91] Recruitment was sometimes based on cultural capital. It was an open secret that the CMC hired men for their sporting ability, usually in 'a cushy number' where they could do little harm: ex-professional footballers and former county cricketers that could significantly boost the firm's reputation. It was a 'great fetish', as John Crittall later put it; or as one Silver End resident remarked: 'if you

[88] Jim White (8 February 1983), Joan Lyon (14 August 1992), Bill and Ida Carey (19 October 1982) interviewed by Janet Gyford (https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 1 November 2019).
[89] Bill and Ida Carey interviewed by Janet Gyford.
[90] *Crittall Magazine* (September, October 1925, March, June 1926).
[91] Jim White (8 February 1983), Ruth Beardwell (29 March 1985) and George Hayes (23 June 1977) interviewed by Janet Gyford (https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 1 November 2019).

was a footballer, you'd get a job in Crittall's. You did, no question about it.'[92] Such practices hardly supported notions of social or economic justice.

Bata emphasised social mobility much more than the CMC. For the company's directors, the firm's *raison d'être* was to end 'proletarian mindsets' and the *Bata Record* regularly profiled those who had earned promotion in a 'they made good' series.[93] Certainly in Zlín there were remarkable tales of upward mobility, and at the epicentre of Bata's meritocratic milieu was the company's education system. By 1932, 1,355 students were enrolled in Zlín; the school boasted of turning peasants into business leaders.[94] Tomas was a keen advocate of Social Darwinism and believed competition was the 'moral duty of man.'[95] According to Devinat writing in 1930, 'every apprentice knows that by working hard and giving proof of initiative he can reach the highest posts', although by 'apprentice' he exclusively meant men. High labour turnover somewhat supported this belief in competition, but also impaired it as promotion was often judged not on skill or innovation but acquiescence, age, sex and endurance. Some Bata opponents estimated annual labour turnover was as high as 40% in the city, but with few alternative employment opportunities it was more likely the 20% quoted by Devinat.[96] As at the CMC, nepotism prevented most from achieving significant social mobility. The inner circle of the company consisted of a small number of close or distant Bata relatives and although Thomas Bata's ascension to the top, even if he worked on a conveyor for a short time, was apparently based entirely on merit this is highly doubtful.[97]

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[92] John Crittall interview with Thea Thompson (1974-77, British Library C707/518/1-2); King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 85; 'Silver End' seminar.
[93] *Bata Record* (11 February, 23 September 1938).
[94] Cekota, *Stormy Years*, 36-39.
[95] Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 29.
[96] Devinat, 'Bata System', 64-66; Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 47-48.
[97] Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 16-25, 321; Cekota, *Entrepreneur Extraordinary*, 106-7.

East Tilbury was probably less socially fluid than Zlín and experienced higher labour turnover. While it was claimed anyone could become a manager – 'he needs no flying start or influence, important connections, wealth or public education' – the directors at the company told a different story. Although Victor Schmidt may have worked his way up (there is little information on his background) and his successor, accountant John Tusa, came from a middling Czech family, most were appointed with little knowledge of the shop floor: Thomas Bata, Sir Edward Spears and Frederick Whyte all had very privileged upbringings. Men who were promoted to foremen sometimes came from white-collar jobs, positions usually filled by those with a secondary education. Those boys 'trained to become foremen and managers' at the hostels only represented around 3% of the workforce in 1935, and while this percentage increased in the later 1930s so too did labour turnover.[98] The TUC estimated between 1934 and 1937 turnover was 66% at British Bata despite its apparent 'paternal kindness' and Walter Citrine remarked that he 'did not see much possibility of people developing the qualities of leadership when they were required to stand and work a machine all day.' The NUBSO supported this assessment and concluded 'the proportion of highly-paid operatives is not large', while hostel girls claimed 'they had been promised good jobs but were being used only as a stop gap.'[99] The Thurrock labour exchange found the rate of 'ineffectual transfer' of juveniles was 'very poor' and of 'grave concern': of the 70 transferees in 1937, 57 returned home within 6 months.[100] Although juvenile work was characterised by high turnover, this was at the extreme end. Given Bata's reluctance to operate democratically, quitting was probably an informal protest, which

[98] *Bata Record* (8 March 1935, 14 August 1936, 1, 8 October 1937); Tusa, *Making a Noise*, 4-5.
[99] British Bata Staff Register 1933-1952 (BHC); TUC, Bata Dispute 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3); NUBSO, Circulars 1937-1952 (MRC 547/D/2).
[100] Thurrock Juvenile Employment Committee (October 1937, ERO D/Z 59/1).

was common in non-unionised workforces.[101] While a limited amount of social mobility was possible for those willing to dedicate their entire lives to the firm, most simply quit.

Therefore, while posing as champions of individual liberty, independence and meritocratic self-determination, in both settlements sophisticated methods of social control restricted and reversed this philosophy. This was not just through modern forms of debt peonage, but also the implementation of autocratic management styles. Sham democratic processes only served to highlight workers' lack of autonomy in these isolated communities, and although British Bata was more authoritarian, the CMC also systematically undermined the autonomy of its workforce. Workers did not meet their employers and landlords as equals on the marketplace, and Britain's experience in the 1930s demonstrated the Smilesian 'delusion', as Orwell's protagonist George Bowling put it at the end of the decade, that 'with thrift, hard work and fair dealing a man can't go wrong.'[102] The chorus of voices lamenting Britain's 'wasted' economic talent also illuminated how technocratic management did not mean greater meritocratic practices; nepotism continued to freely operate and the idea of marketplace justice was a product of ideology, not reality. Moving socially at East Tilbury, and to a lesser extent Silver End, was conditional on acquiescence, and this meant the subjection of the individual and the limiting of personal liberty. It was not possible to have it both ways.

Efficiency as Universal Opulence?

The utopian belief that technology and technocracy would create a world of universal opulence and liberate the human body from physical toil was equally doubtful. While greater mechanisation and atomisation of productive processes greatly improved industrial output,

[101] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures,* 114, 148-49.
[102] Orwell, *Coming Up For Air*, 100-112.

this was the utopia of the consumer and capitalist, not the producer. For operatives on the shop floor, technological innovations and scientific management usually meant more efficient methods of surveillance, control and regimentation. The abundance of dystopias and anti-utopias created in this period, by authors with wildly different politics, scornfully parodied this widespread technological utopianism. The likes of Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936) and Ayn Rand's *Anthem* (1938) all illuminated the dehumanising potential of modernity and usually opted for modernistic architecture to emphasis this point. These works stressed how scientific management and industrial mass production engineered conformity, homogeneity and inhumane worlds. Their criticisms mirrored those of many architects, as discussed in chapter three, who argued modernism reflected the deindividualised 'robot' world of mass-production. With it went the loss of human creativity, art and diversity. Such a world was seemingly encapsulated by Bata's identical colonies, where Czech author Ludvík Vaculík privately wrote 'everything is mechanised here [in Zlín], even culture.'[103]

Anti-modernist sentiment was shared by other contemporaries. J.B. Priestley claimed assembly line 'cogs' had lost 'their central human dignity' and were now 'machine-minded' people confined to 'robot employment.'[104] He later told an audience of architects he 'would rather be a free man, living in a slum, than be compelled at the pistol's mouth to live in a garden city.'[105] Poet Louis MacNeice, journalist Ivor Brown and other literary figures shared the view that assembly line work threatened civilisation and democracy.[106] They had a point. Skilled work for women fell significantly in the first half of the twentieth century, due to greater mechanisation

[103] Quoted in Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 63.
[104] Priestly, *English Journey*, 125-33.
[105] *The Builder* (21 October 1938).
[106] Todd, *The People*, 100-101.

and the decline of the textile industry, and men's skilled work also declined as semi-skilled and unskilled jobs increased.[107] One Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) member wrote the subdivision of labour 'conjured up probably in the mind of every craftsman a nightmare picture of monotonous repetitive work in which all the individuality and initiative of the workman disappeared.' Mass production, he argued, not only replaced and cheapened human labour but also 'reduced' them to a 'machine-minder.'[108] Even pro-business bodies like the Industrial Welfare Society warned against neo-Taylorite practices as they reduced workers to 'mechanical units' and their 'insistent individuality' would cause 'rebellion.'[109] The Institute of Welfare Workers wrote that the forces of modernity 'robbed [workers] of meaning and satisfaction', creating 'depersonalised cogs in a machine' that eroded loyalty to employers. It deprived them of autonomy, independence and, for some men, their masculinity.[110] East Tilbury and Silver End embodied the forces of modernity, technology and technocracy, and despite welfarism similar critiques were also made of these villages.

The Crittall Manufacturing Company

As much as the CMC liked to champion technology as liberating, as with other companies that embraced 'scientific management' it often meant less enjoyable, less fulfilling and more regimented work. Scientific management significantly expanded as a mechanism to organise, measure and speed up workflows in Britain between the wars, and this transformation was largely the result of the French-American management consultant Charles Bedaux. Building on the work of Frederick Taylor, Bedaux developed a system known as 'B' to measure the output

[107] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 107-10.
[108] AEU, *Monthly Journal* (February 1927).
[109] *Journal of Industrial Welfare* (April 1920).
[110] Long, *Healthy Factory*, 130-39.

of 'human energy' into a simplified and more humane method (as it included 'rest' periods) of quantifying individual worker efficiency. Performances were then tracked to measure efficiency over time, with bonuses paid to individuals that significantly beat production targets. While in reality it was not especially 'scientific', as output was still linked to arbitrary rates set by management, it was far easier to implement than Taylor's 'unit times'. For employers, its attraction was in promising cost and labour process controls, increased productivity and lower labour costs.[111] Although by the early 1920s demand for scientific management had sharply declined in the USA, consultants like Bedaux soon acquired lucrative contracts in Europe, particularly in Britain where he 'equalled the fame' of Taylor by the 1930s. By this decade Bedaux had the largest consultancy firm in the world.[112] Although Taylor's ideas had been trialled and discussed in Britain since the 1910s, it was not until 1926, with the arrival of Bedaux's consultancy firm, that scientific management significantly expanded. By 1937, the consultancy had 225 clients in Britain, far more than any other European country.[113] However, as Michael Weatherburn has demonstrated, Bedaux's influence was far more extensive than these figures suggest. His arrival spawned rival management consultancies, which mimicked his approach but often simplified its terms, offering a British variation of the Bedaux system without its toxic reputation. Indeed, where some workers forcefully rejected the Bedaux system, they often accepted one of its 'British' alternatives. Similarly, many progressive employers such as Rowntree's developed its own variation of the system before Bedaux arrived

[111] Littler, *Labour Process*, 107-112; Michael Weatherburn, 'Scientific Management at Work: the Bedaux System, Management Consulting, and Worker Efficiency in British Industry, 1914-48' (unpublished PhD, Imperial College, 2014), 48-57.
[112] Christopher McKenna, *The World's Newest Profession: Management Consulting in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 38-60, 197.
[113] Weatherburn, 'Scientific Management', 38-48, 67-76.

in Britain, in this case labelling it the *Mark*. As such, 'scientific management' was diffused throughout British industry in the 1930s, often in a concealed form.[114]

Although there is no evidence the CMC used the Bedaux consultancy, it did implement time-and-motion studies in the early 1930s to establish effort-norms and targeted output. The firm had explicitly discussed the use of the Bedaux consultancy in 1929, but it was not mentioned in the board minutes thereafter.[115] Nonetheless, 'work study engineers' were used by the firm from the early 1930s, until the role of timing workers and measuring output was later assumed by existing employees, who were trained in the system.[116] It is very likely the CMC used one of Bedaux's 'British' rivals, or possibly developed its own system without the use of external consultants.[117] This would have been a prudent move on the part of management, as the introduction of the Bedaux system sometimes resulted in high-profile strikes from workers who resented the additional discipline, pressure, and surveillance; workers often found the system confusing, frustrating and tiring.[118] The CMC would have been aware of this, not only because its introduction at Hoffmann's in Chelmsford almost resulted in a strike in the late 1920s, but because the AEU was particularly vocal in its opposition. Where the TUC and other moderate unions largely accommodated scientific management, skilled engineers, who prided themselves on their independence and craftsmanship, strongly fought against its introduction. Consequently, many firms 'supressed' the Bedaux name and concealed links to the consultancy when introducing it.[119] The AEU claimed it perfected 'the art of observation' and was anathema to liberty and democracy: it was exploitative, alienating and reduced skilled workers to

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[114] *Ibid*, 62, 113-161.
[115] CMC, Board Minutes (July 1929).
[116] George Hayes (23 June 1977) and Fred Cook (25 April 1983) interviewed by Janet Gyford (https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 1 November 2019).
[117] The specific consultancy used, if any, is not known to the author.
[118] Littler, *Labour Process*, 118-40; Weatherburn, 'Scientific Management', 38-48, 207-14.
[119] Weatherburn, 'Scientific Management', 145-49, 206-26.

'monotonous and soul-killing' labour.[120] For example, at the CMC's main rivals, the Smethwick-based steel-window manufacturer Henry Hope, the partial introduction of the system in March 1933 resulted in violent altercations and a major strike at the previously non-unionised firm. Given the three-month walkout occurred during the height of the Depression, it demonstrated the depth of opposition to the system. It exhausted engineers to the extent that many went off ill and coffins were painted on the factory floor; employees called it the 'hellish Bedaux slave system.'[121]

Crittall workers typically tended to resent the introduction of scientific management. Jim White recalled foremen having 'breakdowns' in the factories ('madhouses') as work was excessively speeded up in the 1930s. 'It was really very fast and really hard work', he said, 'it was a real slog – the job was timed so that you didn't have no slack time, you had to keep going all the time.'[122] 'They wanted to shoot you', Fred Cook recalled – as one of the first time-and-motion men – while others complained their jobs could not be simplified to a single function or fixed amount of time.[123] Long-serving workers recalled that as the business grew there was less camaraderie and trust, and work became a lot harder. There was 'less slackness […] less time for ragging nowadays', as one put it. Another said the firm's faith in its workers' honesty declined. Employees also disliked the introduction of timecards as it meant more surveillance and issued each with a number, further deindividualising them.[124] By 1948, but probably before, each worker had to clock in within three minutes of a shift or wages were automatically

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[120] AEU, *Monthly Journal* (March 1932, December 1938).
[121] National Society of Metal Mechanics, Henry Hope and Sons (1933-1939 MRC MSS.101/M/3/2/41-45); Austin Benjamin, 'A Social History of Economic Development: The Bedaux System at Henry Hope and Sons' (unpublished MA thesis: University of Warwick, 1995).
[122] Jim White (8 February 1983) interviewed by Janet Gyford (https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 1 November 2019).
[123] George Hayes (23 June 1977) and Fred Cook (25 April 1983) interviewed by Janet Gyford.
[124] *Crittall Magazine* (September-October 1925); Bill and Ida Carey interviewed by Janet Gyford.

deducted.[125] Nor did the 'modern' factory mean the end to laborious, dangerous and dirty work. *The Builder* described 'toil-stained and tired' Silver End men leaving the works each evening, and one worker allegedly died of pneumonia after his arm was amputated when steel was caught in his thumb.[126] Annie May Hollick worked at Witham in the late 1930s but found the conditions 'filthy' so returned to her 'lovely clean job' at the nearby Pinkham glove factory. The technological progress, too, was often underwhelming: the work was labour intensive and sometimes used primitive methods, like transporting windows throughout the factory in a wheelbarrow.[127]

Rather than elevating them to higher and more creative outlets, skilled workers begrudged how technology deskilled them, removing their professional pride and individuality. Although the Bedaux system and its variants were primarily used to speed up low-skilled labourers on semi-planned production lines, like those working at the CMC's Witham factory, it was occasionally applied to industries with a previous craft basis or to highly skilled machinist roles.[128] This partly occurred at the CMC, where the 'deskilling' of older employees occurred simultaneously with the expansion and development of new production processes. Where an engineer once straightened, set-out, drilled, brazed, cleaned and hung a window, these tasks were subdivided and mechanised. The company continued to divide or replace skilled roles between the wars through the standardisation of skylight windows (1930), electric welding and automatic presses (1936) and hot-dip galvanisation (1938), which made jobs obsolete or 'unproductive.'[129] At Silver End, the highly skilled tool room engineers were also gradually

[125] CMC, *Works Handbook* (1948, BM).
[126] *Builder* (23 September 1932); *Braintree and Witham Times* (4 April 1935).
[127] Annie May Hollick (22 September 1986) and Jim White (8 February 1983) interviewed by Janet Gyford.
[128] Littler, *Labour Process*, 115-28; McKenna, *World's Newest Profession*, 35-36.
[129] CMC, Board Minutes (April, May 1925, October 1930); Blake, *Window Vision*, 78-81.

undermined by technology and piece work.[130] As neo-Taylorite policies were increasingly extended to office and clerical work at British firms in the 1930s, one member of CMC office staff complained he had 'never imagined work would be quite as boring as what I had to do' at CMC, as his days were spent endlessly filling out order forms.[131] Francis Crittall conceded that white-collar jobs had experienced unprecedented atomisation in 1934.[132] New technology and scientific management were often introduced not to improve working conditions but to better discipline and instrumentalise the workforce.

As the business deteriorated in the early 1930s, so too did the belief that competition in the marketplace would bring universal opulence. The world depression cut short the CMC's long summer, as trade barriers impacted the company's supply network and exports. Its subsidiaries around the world posted consistent losses, especially in the USA, and others stopped producing altogether.[133] In Britain, demand fell due to a slowdown in housebuilding, a sharp fall in the construction of non-residential buildings, and stiffer competition due to a fall in the price of timber. The situation failed to improve until slum clearances started in earnest in 1934 and private housebuilding significantly increased.[134] As Table 6.1 demonstrates, the slowdown hit CMC profits heavily, from a record net profit of £280,751 in 1929 to less than a quarter of this figure four years later. The loss was complicated by Francis Crittall's deteriorating health, which forced him to step down as chairman in 1930 and as governing director in 1933, prior to his death in 1935.[135] This period also marked a step away from Francis's strong belief in economic competition and towards price fixing and the establishment of an oligopoly. While

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[130] London Council of Industrial Workers 1929-1930 (MRC MSS.292/778.22/8).
[131] Weatherburn, 'Scientific Management', 141-49; Imperial War Museum, Unnamed Interview (Catalogue No. 24945).
[132] Crittall, *Fifty Years*, 43..
[133] Blake, *Window Vision*, 68-69.
[134] Aldcroft and Richardson, *Building Between the Wars*, 39-44, 148-49.
[135] CMC, Statement of Accounts 1925-1939; Blake, *Window Vision*, 70.

Francis had previously rejected any possibility of co-operation with his main rivals, in 1929 private talks began between metal window firms over minimum prices and a possible merger with Henry Hope (which happened in 1965). In April 1932, the companies settled on a 'working association' and a national production quota system was agreed by the Metal Window Makers' Association (later the Steel Windows Association) in March 1933 to end 'unnecessary' and 'wasteful' competition. The agreement set minimum prices and allocated national quotas for production based on market share, giving the CMC 66% of standard window and 48% of custom-made window sales, and 57.1% of national exports. Henry Hope and the CMC also collaborated by sharing research costs and merged businesses in China and South Africa.[136]

Table 6.1: CMC Net Profits 1925-1939

Year	Net Profits (to nearest £)
1925	£58,076
1926	£114,085
1927	£169,285
1928	unknown
1929	£280,751
1930	£250,204
1931	£203,350
1932	£100,632
1933	£69,636
1934	£81,357
1935	£172,270
1936	£138,670
1937	£156,699
1938	£179,670
1939	£163,015

Source: CMC, Statement of Accounts 1925-1939

Although there were no laws in Britain preventing such action, unlike in the USA, and these practices were commonplace between the wars, Valentine Crittall worried it could be interpreted as 'profiteering.' The agreement improved profits and output at the CMC, but it

[136] CMC, Board Minutes (April 1929-October 1936); Henry Hope, Board Minutes (April 1932-May 1937, BM).

was undoubtedly a retreat from its faith in competition. In abandoning this principle for market stability, the company was withdrawing from an essential aspect of its philosophy: that technology and unregulated competition improved efficiency and generated universal opulence.[137]

This coincided with a general retreat from its utopianism at Silver End, as ambitions were curtailed, its welfarism was significantly cut and its financial monopoly was eroded. Indeed, the CMC worked hard to protect its utopian village. The firm relocated work there, like its West London bronze factory, and sold assets including portions of land (to Crittall family members). Heron's, a publisher with close dealings with the CMC, moved a small printing works to the village, too. With 52 houses unoccupied in March 1930, the company also reduced rates (unfairly, by letting managers' houses to directors half-price) and advertised for tenants outside its workforce, although few came.[138] Savings were made on some of the later houses by using only single walls (no cavity wall) and abandoning corner windows, while plans for a hospital, swimming pool and 200 more homes were scrapped.[139] Despite this, the difficulties proved insurmountable. In March 1929, even before the company's financial woes truly set in, it discontinued the *Silver End Monthly* and implemented efficiency savings at the department stores, eventually closing the fish department, tailor and sausage factory in 1932 along with its small grocery stores in Witham and Braintree.[140] By 1932 the farms and stores were posting considerable losses, collectively losing £4,327 that financial year, and village assets were systematically sold. In December 1933, the Silver End Hotel was sold to a private brewery, as its loss-making local bus service was also sold. Around this time livestock was sold and the

[137] Blackford, *Modern Business*, 66-76, 122; Blake, *Window Vision*, 77.
[138] SEDC, Board Minutes (August 1929-December 1931).
[139] Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 34; King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 26.
[140] SEDC, Board Minutes (March 1929, July 1932); Fierheller, 'Silver End 1926-1940', 29.

farms leased, and the company unsuccessfully looked to sell parts of the village hall to a local cinema. In a truly symbolic moment, in December 1933 the department stores were leased to the Witham branch of the Co-operative Wholesale Society. After Francis Crittall's death, his possessions were auctioned and 'Manors' was unsuccessfully put up for sale at a bargain price of just £2,750, having been estimated at £9,906 in April 1929.[141]

The project was dissolving. By 1933 the company's grip on the village had weakened and its plans for self-sufficiency, financial monopolisation and corporate consciousness significantly reduced as democratic left-wing organisations invaded the capitalist utopia. In June 1937, the company also ended its supply of electricity to the village and the National Grid took over, thus further eroding its financial monopoly over residents.[142] Meanwhile, the Crittall family lost much of its shareholding by the mid-1930s thanks to restructuring and heavy debts; Francis' death meant the end of unquestioned family control of the business.[143] Paternalism was largely abandoned at this point, too. The firm began to reduce its welfare budget as early as March 1928, probably to help fund Silver End, and in April 1930 welfare expenditure was capped at 30*s* per employee per year, roughly equal to an unskilled man's weekly wage, while events like the annual Sports and Show were cancelled.[144] As we shall see, the human consequences of this rapid shift in the company's fortunes and philosophy created a strong ideological challenge from workers and residents. It became a victim of its own monopolising control. As wages were slashed and jobs were lost, so too was demand for its products and services in the village. This internal contradiction eventually exposed a subsequent flaw in its capitalist utopianism: class

[141] SEDC, Board Minutes (March 1930-November 1933); *Braintree and Witham Times* (31 March, 22 September, 1 December 1932, 19 January, 13 April, 16 November, 7 December 1933, 4 April 1935); *The Observer* (7 July 1935).
[142] CMC, Board Minutes (April 1929, June 1937).
[143] John Crittall interview with Thea Thompson.
[144] CMC, Board Minutes (March 1928-July 1932).

interests were not unified in times of turmoil, and worker-residents were never uncritical automatons passively absorbing the company's edicts.

British Bata

At East Tilbury, British Bata's technocratic world was even more regimented, but this did not mean physical or mental liberation. There was little freedom in its exhaustive centralised system of advanced planning, individual and workshop targets, and the continuously flowing conveyor belts. Although Victor Schmidt publicly claimed the organisation had 'a fairly close parallel in the Bedaux system', as the speed of most productive processes was set by a motorised conveyor belt the firm's production methods were more akin to Fordism. Neo-Taylorite systems like Bedaux's 'B' were primarily used on semi-planned production lines, and therefore it was unlikely to have been applied at Bata. Nonetheless, both Fordism and neo-Taylorite systems shared the goals of speeding up production, simplifying tasks and measuring individual industrial output.[145] While there is no archival evidence that Bata used Bedaux or its variants – and the use of external consultants would have jarred with its philosophy of vertical integration – operatives shared similar complaints including excessive supervision, bullying, and physically draining work.[146] Similarly, for all the company's praise for its modern, healthy factories, complaints abounded of poor ventilation, excessive heat and accidents (all exacerbated during the Second World War).[147] Despite mechanisation, work was labour intensive and dangerous. Jack Larkin started work at East Tilbury in 1939 as a 'clicker' (cutting leather to size) and recalled working just 12 inches from sharp rotating knives as cardboard dust from the machine consumed his face. David Andrews complained of standing up all day

[145] *Times* (24 July 1933); McKenna, *World's Newest Profession*, 35-36.
[146] TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1). British Bata board minutes have not been uncovered.
[147] *Bata Record* (15 July 1938, 21 June, 6 September 1940, 9 May 1941).

on a sprained ankle, when 'one minute seemed like an hour', and Albert Fairbairn said many could not keep up with the speed of the conveyor, which in some cases required operatives to complete a task every few seconds. The demands of continuous production meant 'you weren't allowed to talk to one another […] to leave your machine to go to the toilet', according to Charles Mercer who joined in 1938.[148] Like with Jan Bata's panoptical elevator-office in Zlín, one women claimed the cloakrooms had windows to observe employees.[149] The assertion that technology enabled shorter working weeks was also weakened by the fact British Bata was found to have 'irregularities' over the number of hours worked, especially for juveniles, which may have exceeded the legal limit.[150] The NUBSO observed some workers arriving as early as 5.30am, and reported wives complaining of husbands' long overtime with no extra pay.[151] Similar accusations were made in Zlín, and the firm was fined for such practices in the USA.[152]

New production processes that resulted in craft deskilling at an industry level were more extensive, and celebrated, at British Bata. Where a pair of shoes once took a skilled cobbler a day to make, it could now be completed in just three hours – a Fordist feat in productive organisation.[153] Tomas Bata accepted machines had created greater inequality, but had simultaneously unleashed 'the powers of the human mind.'[154] The British press was more sceptical, noting how juveniles stitching over 5,000 shoes a week were hardly emancipated, even if it meant lower prices for consumers.[155] Similarly, while the arrival of Bata was good for employment in Thurrock, it probably meant higher levels of unemployment elsewhere. Take

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[148] BHC, Memories (https://www.bataheritagecentre.org.uk/bata-memories/ accessed 18 October 2019).
[149] *Bata-ville* (film).
[150] House of Commons 292 (19 July 1934, https://hansard.parliament.uk/); *Shoe and Leather News* (4 November 1937).
[151] NUBSO, Council Minutes (April 1937, MCR 547/D/1/1).
[152] *Ibid* (May 1940); Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 49.
[153] Devinat, 'Bata System', 56-57.
[154] *Bata Record* (1 June 1934).
[155] *Essex Weekly News* (5 July 1935); *News Chronicle* (10 October 1935).

Nick Metson, an ex-serviceman and local bootmaker in Cranbrook, Kent, whose independent business collapsed after the arrival of Bata in his village – something that probably occurred throughout Britain.[156] The fact that the company was resisted so strongly in Britain (and other countries) by trade unions, manufacturers and politicians in footwear-producing regions is unsurprising; British footwear exports were steadily declining between the wars, unemployment in the industry was rising (25.5% in August 1934) and nominal wage earnings slightly fell.[157] Bata did not hire unemployed skilled cobblers but unskilled (and more docile) juveniles who could be paid significantly less.[158] As the firm continued to dominate the British market, in 1944 the TUC unsuccessfully, but pointedly, recommended the industry's nationalisation because it was controlled by 'the hands of a monopolistic company.'[159]

The argument that technology and technocracy transformed masterful independent men into servile androids was forcefully made at East Tilbury. *The Graphic's* Ferdinand Tuohy was particularly scathing of Bata's 'Frankenstein machine-slavery.' Not only did he predict British Bata would 'swamp' the industry until 'the likes of Northampton will have ceased to exist' but claimed it would force other companies to replicate its inhumane practices. 'At Zlín there are now 17,000 workers stamped with "Bata" from the crown of the head to the sole of the shoe', he wrote, warning readers of life in East Tilbury. 'Batists live in a universe of their own around the stupendous fount of their being, the Machine […] they are tabulated and card-indexed from their faith, politics and morals to blood pressure. Bata babes are born in Bata clinics, and educated Batistically.' He compared working there to Czech author Karel Čapek's influential

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[156] Nick Metson interviewed by Simon Evans (1999, British Library C900/07557-07558).
[157] *The Financial News* (29 October 1935); Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 275-85; Gary Magee, 'Manufacturing and technological change', 77, and George Boyer, 'Living Standards: 1860-1939' in Floud and Johnson (eds.), *Cambridge Economic History II*, 287-88.
[158] Automation was lamented by former employees in *Bata-ville* (film) upon discovering nearly all their former jobs were replaced by machines.
[159] TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1).

play *R.U.R* (1920), in which 'robots' (the term first used in English) rebelled and destroyed humanity.[160] The *Saturday Review* used the same analogy, calling Zlín 'Robot Land' and arguing Bata's 'system marks the beginning of what is so terrifyingly depicted in *Brave New World*.'[161] Even Bata's champions like MP Victor Cazalet conceded that in Zlín 'it was difficult to remember that the workers were human beings and not machines'; while Hubert Tiltman accepted labourers were 'cogs in the wheels.'[162] It was 'production without a soul', according to the *Larne Times,* the 'negation of humanity.'[163] By 1939, when nearly 1,500 workers were producing around 12,000 pairs of shoes a day at East Tilbury, the general secretary of the NUBSO, George Chester, privately wrote that work on the 'soulless conveyor system' was 'maddeningly repetitious' and 'seeks to buy them [workers] body and soul.' Life in the village, meanwhile, was 'a charter of slavery […] the operative shall work in the Bata factory, sleep in a Bata bed, eat Bata food, attend Bata amusements, buy Bata clothes, subscribe to Bata's hospitals and doctors, and enjoy Bata's education.'[164]

Justice as Unity of Interests?

Even from the outset, these villages failed to create a genuine sense of unity because economic inequalities were built into the urban environment. While social activities were presented as classless, many forms of recreation excluded most worker-residents and were solely for (male) management. Regular dinners for staff and separate social clubs and activities meant different classes and genders had an ingrained sense of separation. At Community House, management ate in the restaurant and workers in the canteen, and this was also the case in the Silver End

[160] *The Graphic* (23 January 1932).
[161] *Saturday Review* (16 July 1932).
[162] Tiltman, *Slump!*, 149; *Listener* (4 December 1935).
[163] *Larne Times* (16 July 1932).
[164] TUC, Bata Dispute 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3).

village hall.[165] This could create a sense of animosity. The *Bata Record* liked to declare all 'collaborators' were 'equals' but this did not stop some workers vandalising staff bicycles in 1937 during a strike, an act that exposed a sense of class difference even if some office staff were paid similar rates to factory operatives.[166] 'Tennis parties', outings, lunches and garden parties were held by Crittall family members exclusively for white-collar staff.[167] One long-serving Crittall employee hoped social clubs 'would abolish any feeling of envy or malice which may now exists between the staff and the shops' but Silver End residents recalled a 'class barrier' existed in the village which prevented 'mixing'; staff and management would socialise in the hotel, and the rest would visit the social club or nearby pub.[168]

This divide was reinforced visually and spatially. Promotion meant relocating to a larger house and geographical separation from former neighbours. At Silver End, senior management lived in large houses on the periphery of the village – and were afforded more privacy – middle management lived on Francis Way and Boars Tye Road, and the better-paid working class on Silver Street; it was a 'very noticeable' arrangement, as one resident put it.[169] For some, like Labour Party councillor and tool room engineer Thomas Mott, this clashed with his egalitarian politics and his family rejected a relocation after he was promoted in 1940.[170] This segregation even applied to single people in boarding houses, and housing categories were then used to judge garden competitions, further cementing the divide.[171] The same rules applied in Bata colonies, where architectural uniformity was intended to promote social homogeneity but

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[165] *Crittall Magazine* (July 1926); *Bata Record* (1, 8 January 1937, 11 February 1938).
[166] *Bata Record* (3 January 1936); TUC, Bata Dispute 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3).
[167] John Crittall interview with Thea Thompson.
[168] *Crittall Magazine* (September 1925); King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 106.
[169] King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 105; 'Silver End' seminar.
[170] Joan Lyon interviewed by Janet Gyford (14 August 1992, https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 1 November 2019).
[171] SEDC, Board Minutes (January 1928); *Braintree and Witham Times* (23 July 1931).

larger managers' houses had garages and balconies, although greater levels of luxury were found inside. Given both companies pushed a narrative, and philosophy, of upward social mobility and conformity to traditional gender roles, this division only served to illuminate the contradiction between 'living individually' and collective corporate consciousness. In both settlements there were very few middle-aged or older residents, too. Segregation and exclusion were at the very heart of these utopian projects.

As the 1930s progressed East Tilbury and Silver End exposed the fallacy that unity of class interests was truly possible if that harmony was engineered through autocratic practices. This 'unity' was often based on the erosion of liberties and self-determination and was therefore incompatible with the first principle of capitalist utopianism. It was possible to proclaim utopian intent in prosperous times, but the hollowness of this philosophy was uncovered in leaner times. At Silver End, the company's idealism was partially dismantled by the impact of the Depression, but fully dismantled by the agency of workers. The CMC's response to the Depression demonstrated how profits and senior management were prioritised over its workforce, and rather than unify Silver End it exposed political and class factionalism that was to undermine corporate control and push its residents into proclaiming a different form of idealism: that of democratic socialism. At East Tilbury, a long-running strike highlighted the firm's reluctance to accept any form of democratic control. The partial success of both movements, and its causes, demonstrated the yearning for greater equality and autonomy in these villages and exemplified a wider challenge to capitalism in Britain which started in the mid-1930s and culminated in 1945. This momentous shift in British politics can be symbolically traced back to the seemingly microscopic fight against despotism in these 'utopias' a decade earlier.

Silver End

The CMC's financial losses were not evenly felt, and working-class families were disproportionately hit by a wave of unemployment, short time, wage reductions, welfare cuts and evictions. As already demonstrated in Table 6.1, the CMC was profitable throughout the 'great slump' – and continued to, at least partially, satisfy its shareholders and debtors – while rival firms like Henry Hope suffered small losses and forewent directors' bonuses to maintain wages and hours (even if conditions deteriorated).[172] The firm continued to pay Francis and Ellen's considerable business travel expenses, which often amounted to little more than a luxurious cruise, totalling at least £2,400 in 1931. A trip to Australia was expensed at £928 a year later, even though a single return trip cost less than £100.[173] Bonuses continued to be paid to directors, except in 1934, and when Francis Crittall retired from the board in August 1933 he was appointed as a (part-time) 'advisor' at £3,000 per year, a salary three times that of a barrister or 15 times the average annual earnings of a full-time skilled man.[174] Company accounts inconveniently (or shrewdly) grouped directors' salaries, welfare expenditure and interest as one entry, but in 1932 it was likely the company paid over £34,000 in directors' salaries and interest on loans.[175] About the same time, in 1934, Walter Crittall completed his magnificent six-bedroom, four-bathroom mansion near the village of Great Easton, 'New Farm.' The pink modernistic house contained a central three-storey seven-sided glass tower, and a large estate with tennis and badminton courts, a paddock and two orchards.[176]

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[172] Henry Hope, Board Minutes (May 1932-May 1933).
[173] CMC, Board Minutes (November 1931, May 1933); cost of a trip taken by the England women's cricket team in 1934/35: see Adam McKie, *Women at the Wicket* (Leeds: ACS, 2018), 96.
[174] CMC, Board Minutes (August 1933, November 1934); on average incomes see Guy Routh, *Occupation and Pay in Great Britain 1906-1979* (Macmillan, 1980); 63, 120.
[175] CMC, Statement of Accounts (1932): £38,844 in total, assuming that welfare was cut to around £4,500 (or 30s per employee).
[176] Historic England No. 1112200 (https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1112200, accessed 8 April 2020).

Meanwhile, the CMC introduced a series of wage cuts starting in February 1929. Astutely, these were staggered to avoid provoking all three unions and risking a strike. By 1932, the AEU was complaining of short time, a 'severe lowering of wages' and the CMC's increasingly authoritarian attitude.[177] The firm's wage bill for October plummeted by more than a third between 1928 and 1931, when it estimated the average weekly wage for a skilled worker had almost halved. Sackings soon followed. At Silver End, these started on the farms and shops in June 1930, and between 1929 and 1930 the Silver End factory lost almost a quarter of its workforce before further production was assigned to the village. From a highpoint of 3,561 employees in 1929, by 1931 622 employees had been fired including long serving and disabled workers. In a sharp U-turn on its technological utopianism, the firm privately wrote it was 'difficult to employ economically' these men 'by reason of physical disability.'[178] Some disabled workers who kept their jobs, like the blind Silver End telephone operator, Roland Naman, quit as there was 'not enough work to keep him occupied.'[179] Many who had travelled to Silver End from 'depressed' regions now found themselves cast aside. Take Bob Nichol, a Scottish shale miner who relocated to work at the CMC but was jobless for 18 months. Mabel, his wife, recalled their family of five lived off just 29*s* a week in that time, minus 10*s* in rent – there was simply no other employment in the area.[180] In another blow to the supposed unity of financial interests, those who had invested in the company saw the value of their shares fall considerably, and the subsequent reorganisation of shares disadvantaged smaller shareholders.[181] By 1935, the company's reputation for high wages had also been lost, by

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[177] AEU, *Monthly Journal* (April 1929, March 1930, January, February, October 1932).
[178] CMC, Board Minutes (June 1930-September 1932); Workers' Union (WU), Braintree Branch Minutes (January 1932, MRC MSS.51/4/12).
[179] *Daily Mail* (27 September 1934).
[180] Mabel Nichol interviewed by Janet Gyford (17 June 1977, 14 March 1988, https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 12 April 2020).
[181] Blake, *Window Vision*, 75.

which time Henry Hope was paying skilled men significantly more in equivalent roles.[182] 'They talk about Crittall's big money but I never seen any of it', Doris Leatherdale recalled, who worked there from the late 1930s, 'it just wasn't there.'[183]

By 1932 there was at least 2,000 unemployed men in Braintree – around 800 married – holding daily gatherings in the town centre, often denouncing capitalism. Vicars lamented the 'deplorably wretched state of poverty' in the once prosperous town, while others suffered in 'secrecy' because of 'the pride of poverty', as the *Braintree and Witham Times* put it. Florence Balaam, a Silver-End resident and leading member of the Maldon Constituency Labour Party, addressed a gathering of 2,000 hunger marchers in Braintree in October 1932 and castigated 'a system which allows poverty on the one hand and palaces on the other.'[184] But this situation was most clearly evident in her own village. Families began to fall back on charities, withdrew from the company's (now much reduced) activities and faced the debilitating clasp of unemployment.[185] Evictions soon followed. Tenants asked the company for reduced rates but, failing that, many voluntarily left. Others ended hire-purchase agreements.[186] Some were forcibly removed, and others 'done a moonlight', even leaving behind their furniture. The firm prioritised jobs for those willing to relocate to Silver End, but plenty of Witham residents were reluctant to move according to Horace Brooks (who joined the firm in the late 1920s) and lost their jobs because they 'didn't approve' of such policies. Possibly they had seen how residents had been treated.[187] Government support did not cover rent, so many forced the company to

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[182] WU, Window Frames, 1930-1947 (MRC MSS.126/TG/RES/GW/179/1).
[183] Doris Leatherdale interviewed by Janet Gyford (14 March 1988, https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 1 November 2019).
[184] *Braintree and Witham Times* (6 October 1932, 23 March 1933); *Maldon Labour Party: First Fifty Years*, 12.
[185] *Braintree and Witham Times* (7 April, 15 September, 3 November 1932, 2 March 1933).
[186] SEDC, Board Minutes (March-April 1929).
[187] *Ibid* (April 1929); Horace Brooks interviewed by Janet Gyford (8 November 1985, https://www.janetgyford.com/ accessed 1 November 2019).

take them to court; evictions followed, and repayment schedules were enforced. The company could be ruthless, too. Take the case of ex-serviceman Fred Pennock, who injured his back working at Braintree and was moved to Silver End; the lighter work proved too much for him, but the company refused to award him full disability pay. Pennock successfully sued the company for full pay and received four-months' backpay.[188] Such actions hardly chimed of social justice and solidarity.

Some Silver End residents, probably in desperation, turned to petty crime. Servants were found stealing silverware, while other residents were caught stealing chickens.[189] William Stephenson, a disabled ex-serviceman and foreman at Witham, admitted stealing timber from a construction site in the village: his hours and wages had plummeted, but he had refused to accept the 'charity' of his neighbours.[190] The incident highlighted how social divisions within the village and the self-surveillance of residents could prevent mutual solidarity. As burglaries spiked in the region and the number of unemployed continued to rise, Francis Crittall asked for a greater police presence in Silver End in early 1934 – a demand attacked by local Labour councillors as a 'false rumour' about the declining 'morals' of residents.[191] That year four CMC lorry drivers, two from Silver End, were found guilty of theft, fraud and failing to pay hotel costs.[192] Clearly these were desperate times for many residents: petty crime was a means of survival and possibly more widespread than convictions suggest.

Working conditions also deteriorated, and not just because of 'scientific management'. The firm imposed longer hours, reduced overtime pay and imposed 'a drastic revision of working

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[188] *Braintree and Witham Times* (8 May 1931, 11 February 1932, 23 January 1935).
[189] *Ibid* (23 January 1931, 24 December 1935).
[190] *Ibid* (23 July 1931).
[191] *Ibid* (22 December 1932, 4 January, 1 February 1934).
[192] *Ibid* (5 April 1934).

conditions and earnings' with little or no consultation, according to the AEU.[193] This discontent was recalled in interviews with former employees, who remembered the early 1930s as a time when working conditions, wages and the ethical standards of the company rapidly deteriorated. In particular, the indiscriminate sackings frightened workers into accepting lower wages: it was common for dozens of men to be laid off in one evening.[194] To the frustration of many employees, the unions, still cosy with management, put up little resistance. 'There wasn't many meetings', George Hayes recalled, 'only one meeting I remember when [Robert] Small was there and […] those that got up and spoke got the sack […] you daren't open your mouth.' Jim White spoke of colleagues 'shaking' every evening because there was 'no chance of getting another job.' White said one union official and 'ordinary workman' – a 'really good chap […] too good for the management, he was all for the men' – became too forceful and was sacked, and killed himself several months later.[195] Clearly the workforce and management experienced the Depression markedly differently.

Something had to give, and initially this arrived in the form of the 1933 local elections. These were the first local elections at Silver End, having been amalgamated into Witham Urban District Council. According to Joan Lyon, whose father Thomas Mott was the Braintree AEU secretary, Francis Crittall asked the Labour Party to allow his son, Dan, to win one of the four seats. The party initially agreed, but after the CMC put forward another candidate, Frank Hobson (*Braintree and Witham Times* editor and company propagandist) the deal was rescinded.[196] The subsequent election, which neared a full turnout, became a battle for the

[193] AEU, *Monthly Journal* (March 1930-September 1932).
[194] Fred Cook (25 April 1983) and Lesley and Joan Skingsley (11 October 1991) interviewed by Janet Gyford (https://www.janetgyford.com/, accessed 1 November 2019).
[195] George Hayes (23 June 1977) and Jim White (8 February 1983) in *ibid*.
[196] Joan Lyon in *ibid*.

soul of the village. On the one hand stood 'Mr Dan' (residing in 'Le Chateau') and Hobson ('Wolverton'), who lauded their 'business qualifications' and appealed to ratepayers in an anti-government platform that rejected higher taxes to fund public works. On the other stood four members of the Labour Party, including Mott and Ken Cuthbe – a CMC welder and ex-serviceman – who suggestively argued 'the general interests of the community must be safeguarded even at the expense of private interests.' The candidates called for more council housing and a greater diversity of employment, and subsequently claimed over 75% of votes. This signalled not only a rejection of the company's faltering corporate consciousness but also its capitalist utopianism. What followed was a sustained battle between the party and the 'Crittall element' in Silver End, as Florence Balaam put it privately, amounting to an ideological tussle between the company and support for greater government intervention, transparency, democracy and market competition.[197]

The six successful Labour councillors (two from nearby Rivenhall) formed a minority opposition and, so Lyon put it, 'brought politics to Witham' by tackling 'low-level corruption' and business 'perks' that had long held custom.[198] From the mid-1930s the Maldon Constituency Labour Party repeatedly argued CMC ownership of the water supply and the tied cottage system was exploitative.[199] Where the previous council had generously funded an extension of Crittall's Bradwell Spring to Witham, the councillors immediately challenged these subsidies and called for its public ownership so 'the ordinary working class' were not exploited (the sale was completed in 1953). They challenged rates charged for other CMC monopolies too, such as

[197] Ken Cuthbe records (ERO A8184); *Braintree and Witham Times* (5 October 1933).
[198] Joan Lyon interviewed by Janet Gyford.
[199] Ken Cuthbe records (ERO A8184); Maldon Constituency Labour Party (ERO A8071 D/Z 208).

refuse collection, sewage, public lighting and electricity.[200] They improved the rate of council house building.[201] The company's hegemony was also disintegrating within the Maldon Constituency Labour Party. Valentine Crittall stepped down from the leadership of the local party in January 1929, not long after CMC assistant manager Harvey Wrate resigned as treasurer. This was likely due to the CMC's ongoing issues, estrangement from an increasingly socialist party, and the death of Valentine's wife in March 1932. Subsequently, Valentine played little role in the party as it became vocally more anti-capitalist. He was replaced by journalist William Toynbee as Maldon's candidate, and for the first time the constituency explicitly advocated 'socialism' and called for the nationalisation of key industries, higher taxation and, noticeably, the abolition of tied cottages. It courted figures on the left of the party, like Sir Stafford Cripps, supported his call for a popular front in 1939, and even shared platforms with the Communist Party in Braintree.[202]

At the epicentre of this shift leftwards was Silver End. The Maldon Constituency Labour Party was dominated by residents of Silver End throughout the 1930s: Ken Cuthbe as honorary secretary and finance secretary (1929-1944), national election agent (1933-1938) and chairman of the Essex Federation of Labour Parties (1936-1947); Florence Balaam (1931-1932) and Madge Horridge (1933-) as treasurers; Madge Horridge as press officer (1932-); Florence Balaam (1932) and Irene Cathcart (1933-) as membership secretaries. The prominence of women added an additional dimension to this revolt against the company, which had marginalised women. Silver End returned Labour councillors for the next 35 years (one Conservative was elected in 1968), a remarkable feature given the village's ideological

[200] *Braintree and Witham Times* (1 December 1932, 2 November 1933, 1 February, 1, 29 March, 28 June 1935, 28 February 1936); CMC, Board Minutes (December 1953).
[201] Gyford, *History of Witham*, 123-28.
[202] Maldon Constituency Labour Party 1925-43 (ERO A8071 D/Z 208, A8183); Ken Cuthbe records (ERO A8184).

foundations, early corporate control, and the region's historic Conservative strength.[203] Unlike Valentine Crittall, Robert Small and Harvey Wrate, all but Florence Balaam – a former social worker – were working-class. Meanwhile, as the CMC sold assets and Francis and Ellen Crittall died, the Crittall family also lost its grip on the associational life of the village. Family members were replaced on bodies including the Nursing Association, Infant Welfare Society and Mothers' Union, while new clubs were formed unaffiliated to the company or family.[204] Women's Institute participation steadily fell after 1934.[205] Labour Party members, meanwhile, joined the community council, cricket club and school board committees, often replacing Crittall family members.[206] A popular grassroots takeover had taken place as Valentine's liberal reformism was replaced by a forceful attack on capitalism. Hundreds of people attended Silver End's annual May Day celebrations and amid the dancing, competitions, fancy dress and music, speakers chastised capitalism for its inequality, economic oppression and 'farcical' perversion of democracy. 'The rights of citizenship, the principles of economic co-operation and social justice have been violated by capitalistic governments', Toynbee told the audience in 1934, 'an economic system which spreads unemployment, destitution and insecurity amongst the people, whilst wealth in abundance and an unequalled capacity to produce for the satisfaction of all human needs are held in leash.'[207]

It was not just May Day: the poorly financed party gradually developed an associational culture to challenge that of the CMC. As the firm retreated from cultural funding, from the mid-1930s the party established football and cricket competitions, held seasonal celebrations and hosted

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[203] Maldon Constituency Labour Party 1925-43 (ERO A8071 D/Z 208, A8183); Ken Cuthbe records (ERO A8184).
[204] *Braintree and Witham Times* (6 April, 18 May, 15 June, 6 July 1933, 26 April 1934).
[205] Fierheller, 'Silver End 1926-1940', 31.
[206] *Braintree and Witham Times* (14 September 1934, 18 April 1935); Silver End County School, Minutes 1928-1948 (ERO E/MM 98/1).
[207] *Braintree and Witham Times* (6, 13 February 1931, 12 May 1932, 11 May 1933, 3 May 1934).

the Left Book Club. All helped cement a popular socialist culture through leisure and mutual aid.[208] Silver End was the nerve centre. Whist drives, bazaars, mock parliaments, children's parties, dinners and smoking concerts became a regular feature of life in the village. The women's section was particularly active in organising conferences and social evenings.[209] Where the CMC ended its educational programmes, the Labour Party renewed them with vigour. Lectures were frequent, but unlike the CMC tackled topics like pluralist economics, Soviet Russia and women's position in society. In 1934 a Silver End Labour League of Youth was formed and the first Workers' Education Association (WEA) evening course started.[210] A year later the village hall hosted a British Institute of Adult Education art exhibition, complete with evening lectures, which 6,000 attended.[211] Where homogeneity came to symbolise the early village, diversity was celebrated. Families from the 'old country' brought not only a history of trade unionism, but their own cultural and religious celebrations – often centred around the Labour Party – which drew hundreds of revellers. St Patrick's Eve dances, Welsh choral evenings, Burns night, Scottish dancing and other festivities dominated the social calendar: diversity was openly celebrated. As Susan King put it, Silver End came to be defined by a 'sense of innovation, co-operation and egalitarianism.'[212]

The same cultural transformation was experienced in the religious life of the village. While attendance at St Francis Church (Anglican) was reportedly very poor, the Silver End Congregational Church flourished and even expanded from a capacity of 170 to 500 in 1936.[213]

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[208] Maldon Constituency Labour Party 1925-1943 (ERO A8071 D/Z 208, A8183).
[209] *Ibid*; *Braintree and Witham Times* (3, 6 December 1929, 8 May 1931, 14 January 1932, 2 February 1933, 20 December 1934).
[210] *Braintree and Witham Times* (20 October 1932, 8 February, 8 March, 3 May, 11 September 1934, 28 February 1935).
[211] *Manchester Guardian* (20 March, 1 April, 20 May 1935); *Observer* (26 May 1935).
[212] *Braintree and Witham Times* (22 March 1934); King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 79, 91-96.
[213] *Braintree and Witham Times* (18 June, 1 October 1936).

As with the wider village, Crittall involvement with the church, which had never been large, sharply dropped in the mid-1930s just as it enjoyed an ever-closer relationship with the Labour Party.[214] 'Most of the pioneers of the Labour Party were staunch Congregationalists', Joan Lyon recalled, 'great churchmen, you know.'[215] Between the wars Nonconformist denominations, particularly Congregationalism, grew ever closer to the Labour Party. As Pippa Catterall has demonstrated, Nonconformist churches increasingly abandoned the Liberal Party in the 1920s and 1930s as the state came to be viewed not with suspicion but a form of 'practical Christianity.' The democratic, self-governing, co-operational and egalitarian values of Congregationalism aligned with Labour's agenda. Where Free Church leadership in cities was often middle class, in rural regions (particularly East Anglia) it was usually working class.[216] Silver End was no different, and as the zeitgeist of the village changed so too did the Crittalls' estrangement from its social leadership.

Democratic socialism was also promoted by the Witham Co-Operative Society, which worked closely with the Labour Party in the village.[217] After taking over the department stores, it established itself as a key institution in the life of the village: hosting grand concerts and cinema nights, organising outings and holidays, launching an educational programme, and forming a Women's Co-operative Guild.[218] These activities were explicitly political. The Co-operative boasted of 'converting the residents of the village from the purchase of capitalist-made commodities to Co-operatively-made goods', of making 'Silver End Co-operatively-conscious' and urged residents not to 'be afraid of politics' as it sought to replace capitalism with a co-

[214] *Ibid* (1932-36).
[215] Joan Lyon interviewed by Janet Gyford.
[216] P. Catterall, *Labour and the Free Churches, 1918-39* (Bloomsbury, 2016), 1-13, 42, 115, 147-49, 179-86.
[217] Maldon Constituency Labour Party 1934-1943 (ERO A8071, D/Z 208).
[218] *Braintree and Witham Times* (1 February, 19 April, 22 November, 20 December 1934).

operative commonwealth.[219] It taught residents about co-operation – of its democratic and open ownership – and presented itself as the 'true alternative' to capitalism, 'stripped of selfishness' and economic unfreedom. The enterprise demonstrated, as one speaker in Witham put it, that 'the working class were equally as capable of controlling industry […] the very foundations of capitalism are being shaken.'[220]

The Silver End branch of Witham Co-operative was remarkably successful, but the extent to which its politics played a role in this success is debatable. Without cutting a significant number of departments, the struggling stores were immediately turned around. A meeting held after the takeover attracted 500 people, of which 359 became members. In the first three months the branch almost tripled monthly sales under CMC and gained 583 new members, 'in spite of a violent press campaign conducted by certain newspapers against the movement.' Thereafter membership and sales steadily increased and by 1938 the branch's four stores were turning over almost £120,000 and boasted 2,966 members (Silver End being the largest). Regular meetings were held in which all members could express opinions, vote on motions and elect officials.[221] This trend was matched elsewhere in North Essex: in 1940 the Colchester and East Essex branch turned over close to £1m.[222] Although Paul Johnson has argued that support for the Co-operative was rarely motivated by its politics, in opposition to idealists like Beatrice and Sidney Webb, the explicit political stance taken by the Witham Co-operative, Labour Party support within the village and the rapid turnaround in patronage for the store challenges this

[219] *Ibid* (6 December 1933, 15 February 1934, May 1935).
[220] Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS), *The Wheatsheaf* (Witham inserts, January 1923, January, June 1926, January 1927, December 1930, June 1932).
[221] *Braintree and Witham Times* (7 December 1933); CWS, *Rules of the Witham Co-operative Society* (1933, ERO D/Z 189/1/7); *Wheatsheaf* (Witham inserts May, August 1934, February 1939).
[222] Braintree Co-operative Society (ERO A11977 D/Z449); Colchester and East Essex Co-operative Society, *100 Up!* (Essex, 1961).

conclusion at Silver End.[223] Like in municipal estates, rather than an 'embourgeoisement' of the working class it is likely the shared and disproportionately felt class experience of the Great Depression, alongside the clear divisions of wealth carved into Silver End's urban landscape, intensified class consciousness.[224] Similarly, as the company dismantled its financial enmeshment there followed a flowering of small, independent businesses in the village, in sharp contrast to the CMC's previous monopoly. By the mid-1930s, Silver End had an independent tea house, newsagents, cobbler, cabinetmaker and general store, which joined the farms and hotel in operating outside Crittall's hegemony.[225] It is probable the reluctance to patronise the CMC stores was a form of protest against the company's financial monopoly, or the treatment of its workforce.[226]

Certainly, the Co-operative and unions saw it this way: financial spending was described as an everyday act of political solidarity. Scottish Labour MP William Leonard, speaking in Witham in February 1934, told an audience that the Depression had proved 'ordinary' families could not trust 'capitalists' with their money, but the Co-operative was 'sure and safe.' The Co-operative also provided various forms of rival financial enmeshment, such as a death benefit fund, but in this regard unions truly challenged corporate enmeshment.[227] The Workers' Union offered contributory sickness, unemployment, pensions, death, accident and disablement funds, along with scholarships and educational programmes. These schemes were thought to help towards its goal of 'eliminating competition and substituting it with co-operation.'[228] The AEU, too, offered members similar benefits, 16 in total, plus mortgages (5,000 by March 1930). Adverts

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[223] Johnson, *Saving and Spending*, 126-29.
[224] Olechnowicz, *Becontree Estate*, 125-36.
[225] *Kelly's Directory of Essex* (1933), 396; De-Coverley, *Silver End Memories*, 8-11.
[226] As suggested by Ruth Beardwell interviewed by Janet Gyford.
[227] *Braintree and Witham Times* (11 February 1932, 15 February 1934).
[228] WU, *Rules of the Workers' Union* (1929, MRC MSS.126/WU/X/6); Braintree Branch Minutes 1922-1932 (MRC MSS.51/4/12); *Report and Balance Sheet for 1935* (1936, MRC MSS.126/TG/1154/).

for these schemes argued that choosing to invest in 'your own union' weakened corporate enmeshment, which was 'part of a prearranged attack on workers' organisations.' The *AEU Monthly Journal* maintained the financial support it provided members (over £7m paid out between 1920 and 1927) was matched by its 'intangible' political benefits. It placed 'restraint on the petty tyrannies of employers which make life so unbearable', it argued in July 1927, 'it imparts motive and spirit to a worker's life and surrounds them with an atmosphere in which they feel themselves to be men and not serfs. It places them on a footing of equality with those who by virtue of their ownership of capital would otherwise dictate terms and conditions of employment as uncontrolled autocrats and economic dictators.' A similar argument was made against employers' educational programmes. As one district organiser put it in 1923, 'where shall we get our instruction? From our masters? […] surely not – the piper calls the tune.' As such, the AEU worked closely with the WEA for 'the social and industrial emancipation of the workers.'[229] By providing their own welfare and self-help, unions deliberately challenged the apparatuses of financial enmeshment employers like the CMC established and undermined corporate consciousness.

The deteriorating conditions at the CMC, and Silver End, resulted in a strike in April 1936. Although only involving skilled men at Braintree and Silver End, the four-week walkout was symbolic of the disintegration of capitalist utopianism in the mid-late 1930s. Two years earlier the AEU branch had voted to strike but was stopped by last-minute concessions, but by 1936 the wages of skilled men had fallen from an average of £3 a week to £2 14*s* (if full time) and the fear-inducing Robert Small was unable to quell unrest.[230] The CMC immediately flexed its

[229] AEU, *Monthly Journal* (March 1923, August 1926, April, July 1927, March 1930).
[230] CMC, Board Minutes (April 1936); Microfilm history of the CMC (ERO T/Z67), 149; Fred Cook interviewed by Janet Gyford.

muscles, calling the police to attend the Silver End factory and using its media dominance to heavily criticise the 'unofficial' strike in the 'non-political' *Braintree and Witham Times*. Ignoring complaints over working conditions, it argued the failure to gain the support of all three unions invalidated the strike. The firm's position (without irony) was that the strikers were acting undemocratically by waging a 'little war' against a benevolent employer, galvanised by a sliver-tongued union official.[231] In fact, the AEU condemned the action: this was a grassroots revolt. While a small increase in wages was agreed, the strike failed to alter the major issue at the firm, which was its falling ethical standards. Unions continued to complain of poor working conditions, falling pay, unpaid holidays and the firing of agitators in later years.[232] Nonetheless, the walkout was emblematic of opposition to the firm and put an end to the belief the CMC was a high-paying company that prioritised the welfare and co-operation of its workforce. It demonstrated discontent at the enmeshment of unions that prevented legitimate strike action and highlighted how the firm's apparatuses of acquiescence (the media, unions, paternalism, welfare) had failed. The fact it happened in 'Mr Dan's' department at Silver End epitomised the firm's weakened corporate control.

East Tilbury

Bata's 'utopia' at East Tilbury also dissolved in the later 1930s. This was not unique to Britain: as it aggressively expanded throughout the world Bata was subject to criticism and political disputes from both right and left. Outside of Czechoslovakia, this was initially sparked by *Der unbekannte Diktator: Thomas Bata* (The Unknown Dictator: Thomas Bata) a 1928 book by

[231] *Braintree and Witham Times* (9, 16, 23 April 1936).
[232] AEU, *Monthly Journal* (June 1936, November 1938, January 1940); WU, Window Frames, 1930-1947 (MRC MSS.126/TG/RES/GW/179/1).

Austrian journalist Rudolph Philipp. In it, Philipp portrayed Thomas as a ruthless exploiter who suppressed dissent and oversaw a regime of near-impossible individual targets. The result was high labour turnover, risk transfer from employer to employee, considerable psychological and physical strain, and illegal working hours.[233] The book made it to England and its claims were repeated in the *Daily Herald*.[234] Other publications soon followed which equally painted Bata as an industrial despot. In 1933, Czech novelist Svatopluk Turek published *Botostoj* (The Shoe Machine) which was widely interpreted as a savage attack on Bata (without naming the company).[235] Three years earlier, the League of Nations' investigation into the firm upheld many of these claims.[236] Regular 'anti-Bata' congresses were held in Czechoslovakia by shoemakers protesting against the firm's increasing monopoly, and in 1939 an international trade union conference was held in Prague, which delegates from Britain's NUBSO attended.[237] In Europe and North America, trade unions, businesses and political parties attempted to prevent the firm establishing colonies, usually after successfully lobbying for higher tariffs on footwear imports.[238] Similar arguments that Bata had launched an 'industrial invasion' were made in England, often with a xenophobic veneer targeting Czech 'aliens.'[239]

At East Tilbury, British Bata did not sell its assets or relinquish formal control – unlike at Silver End – so methods of resistance against its omnipresence were initially not as conspicuous. While Jan Bata declared Victor Schmidt 'in supreme charge […] like a king in his kingdom', this is doubtful.[240] Many employees chose not to engage with the firm's social and cultural project,

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[233] Rudolph Philipp, *Der unbekannte Diktator: Thomas Bata* (Berlin: Stern Verlag, 1928).
[234] *Daily Herald* (21 August 1928).
[235] Sevecek, 'Company Towns', in Ševeček and Jemelka (eds.), *Company Towns*, 17-18.
[236] Devinat, 'Bata System.'
[237] TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1); Bata, *Knowledge in Action*, 219-228.
[238] For example, *Hide and Leather* (USA) (31 August 1935).
[239] TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1); *Framlingham Weekly News* (13 February 1932); *Leeds Mercury* (23 June 1933).
[240] *Grays and Tilbury Gazette* (19 October 1935).

including middle-management, which was made easier because most employees did not live in East Tilbury. Some may have actively tried to avoid living in the village: in November 1940, the firm claimed only 16% of its workforce lived there but it could accommodate 25%.[241] Others shunned participating in British Bata's social activities. Although cheap or subsidised annual events proved very popular, many well-publicised activities had a disappointingly low turnout, and the firm lambasted the 'deplorable apathy' of its workforce. Very few contributed articles to the *Bata Record*, 40% of workers did not subscribe to the company's contributory welfare scheme, and the proposed formation of a garden club in 1938 failed due to a 'poor response.'[242] By February 1939, only around 10% of the workforce were members of the Bata Recreation Club.[243] Given this, and 'semi-secret grumbling' among workers, a large portion of the workforce probably actively rejected its corporate consciousness-raising.[244] Even in East Tilbury, employees could find some relief from the firm's relentless financial monopoly. The 'Nook Café' – a newsagents, café and book-lender – operated in the village before Bata and despite the firm's aggressive attempt to remove it (supposedly offering a very generous £4,000 for the site) the business was a popular institution, especially among juveniles.[245] Formal opposition came from the Labour-controlled Thurrock District Council, which rejected the company's application for a loan guarantee to cover building more company housing in 1936 'on principle' because it would 'perpetuate the tied-house system.'[246]

It was not until 1937 that British Bata faced its greatest opposition, in the form of a protracted and very public strike. With little knowledge of the isolated 'compound', the TUC began

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[241] *Bata Record* (15 November 1940); Interview with Mrs Bone (ERO SA 3/404/1).
[242] *Bata Record* (10 January 1936-16 September 1938).
[243] *Ibid* (3 February 1939): 329 members of a workforce of 2,000, but wives of male workers were also eligible.
[244] *Ibid* (21 August 1936).
[245] Rumsey, *Bata Factory*; BHC, Cliff and Millie Pritchard Memories (https://www.bataheritagecentre.org.uk/bata-memories/, accessed 23 March 2020).
[246] *Grays and Tilbury Gazette* (10 October 1936).

investigating working conditions at the firm in November 1935 with the aim of unionising its workforce. In December 1936 the NUBSO launched its own investigation, likely with the implicit support of an anxious Federated Association of Boot and Shoe Manufacturers which reported a tripling of Bata imports between 1935 and 1937 (as East Tilbury production also sharply increased). Their investigations exposed a long list of alleged abuse, including its military-like hostel regimes, juvenile exploitation, poor housing, strong punishments, long hours of unpaid overtime, and financial control of employee wages. This 'backstairs' approach was necessary, the NUBSO concluded, because of British Bata's blunt refusal to meet with unions. The company was clearly aware of these investigations – senior management caught union officials in the village and attempted to infiltrate a union meeting – and acted to pre-empt any activity.[247] It was during this period the firm formed its unelected Management Advisory Committee (MAC), launched its welfare scheme (the NUBSO thought it 'not valued by the operatives to any degree'), increased its social activities, temporarily halted fines and relaxed the speed of the conveyor. In April 1937, Schmidt warned employees against 'devoting too much attention to scaremongers and propagandists.'[248] This proved successful: when the strike was launched on 9 September 1937, with just a handful of union members but with the hope many others would join, just 70 or 80 walked out. British Bata quickly imposed its carrot and stick approach: strikers were offered 1*s* to immediately return to work; those who refused were sacked. The NUBSO lamented that Bata's extensive methods of social control had ensured workers' acquiescence: 'four years of skilful propaganda by this firm has produced an appalling state of mind.'[249]

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[247] TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1); NUBSO, Council Minutes (December 1936-August 1937, MRC 547/D/1/1/28); *Shoe and Leather News* (29 July 1937).
[248] *Bata Record* (16 April 1937); NUBSO, Council Minutes (May-September 1937).
[249] *Times* (10 September 1937); NUBSO, Council Minutes (September 1937).

But the initial poor showing was not entirely due to Bata's 'skilful propaganda', nor the premature timing of the strike. High unemployment and few job opportunities locally meant most were unwilling to risk striking. Even the local trades council was reluctant to help 'owing to most of the members of the Labour Party having relatives employed at Bata.' In some families, juveniles were the only family members employed. High labour turnover, the high proportion of juvenile workers and Bata's vehement anti-unionism meant union membership was hard to sustain.[250] However, the strikers did receive significant support, not only from local political bodies like women's Co-operative guilds, Labour Party branches and unions (the latter two picketed Bata's retail shops), but also bus drivers in Thurrock who donated to the strike fund and refused to drive workers to East Tilbury.[251] After a week, the Federated Association officially supported the strike and in October the issue of working conditions and unionisation was raised in parliament.[252] Unions throughout Europe and America sent letters of solidarity to the strikers, praising their fight against 'subjection.'[253] Although by then only 114 were on strike, workers and residents appeared to have supported the strike in small ways, like boycotting Bata shops in the village.[254] At the end of November, on the NUBSO's request, the TUC launched a local publicity campaign: hundreds of posters and 40,000 flyers poured into Thurrock, and plans for a national boycott started.[255]

It was a bitter and sometimes violent dispute. British Bata argued its internal MAC was the only legitimate method of raising complaints and rejected any negotiation. A special edition of the *Bata Record* was hastily printed on the day of the strike that labelled strikers 'enemies' and

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[250] NUBSO, Council Minutes (April 1936-June 1942).
[251] *Ibid* (June-October 1937); TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1); *Daily Mail* (30 October 1937).
[252] *Shoe and Leather News* (16 September 1937); House of Commons 328 (28 October 1937, https://hansard.parliament.uk/).
[253] TUC, Bata Dispute 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3).
[254] *The Tribune* (29 October 1937); NUBSO, Council Minutes (November 1937).
[255] TUC, Bata 1928-1944 (MRC MSS.292/633/1).

demanded the 'complete loyalty and trust' of its workforce. Schmidt declared the action of the 'stop-outs' had 'no practical purpose whatsoever' and did not entertain the thought they had reasonable complaints in his 'model town.'[256] Even so, further concessions were made. Minimum wages were increased to trade union rates, welfare spending improved, MAC coverage increased and workers were issued silver shoe badges to demonstrate their 'loyalty.'[257] The company's loudspeakers played throughout the day in 'an attempt to hide the truth' from its workforce, as the NUBSO put it.[258] Indeed, to some extent union persistence was galvanised by the company's aggression. On the first day of the strike staff manager Arthur Tucker deliberately drove his car into a crowd of several hundred protesters at an open-air meeting, injuring three of its leaders.[259] Some strikers retaliated by laying nails on the road to puncture tyres and, in October, threw rocks at a Bata bus transporting workers.[260] But by this time the company had banned protesters from entering East Tilbury after foremen 'attempted to overthrow' a car that regional NUBSO organisers were travelling in (quick police action 'averted an alarming situation').[261]

British Bata failed to realise that while working conditions and pay were important concerns it was the company's authoritarianism that truly motivated the strike. The NUBSO contended that while British Bata reached the 'national agreement' within the trade, which was thought to formally cover 60% of footwear production and a further 34% informally, it failed to meet standards on transparency, the ratio of adults to juveniles and working conditions.[262] Bata's

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[256] *Bata Record* (September, 1 October 1937, 13 May 1938).
[257] *Ibid* (September 1937)
[258] NUBSO, Council Minutes (May 1937); *Shoe and Leather Record* (16 September 1937).
[259] *Guardian* (23 October 1937).
[260] *Daily Mail* (17 September 1937); *Guardian* (29 October 1937).
[261] NUBSO, Council Minutes (September 1937).
[262] *Shoe and Leather Record* (16 September 1937); *Shoe and Leather News* (11 November 1937); NUBSO, Circulars 1938 (MRC 547/D/2/8).

wage reductions for damaged products was particularly resented. The firm defended this practice by claiming it only amounted to 2% of piece work, but unions suspected it was far higher (possibly over 25% of wages) and oral testimony suggests it was around 10%.[263] The NUBSO and its supporters, meanwhile, argued that while the number of strikers was small the dispute was 'as far reaching in its importance as any that has taken place in the last 20 years' because it intended to end the 'abject servility' of the workforce. Bata made 'dictatorship its forte' and its refusal to accept collective bargaining meant its young workforce was in 'complete subjection.'[264] British Bata was viewed as an affront to democracy; as the NUBSO put it in its flyers: 'if workers have not the right to organise, there is no freedom!'[265] Indeed, images in the *Bata Record* suggest protesters greeted workers with the Roman salute, possibly as a response to reports Bata provided 400,000 army boots used during Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.[266] Allegations of Bata's links with fascism would continue into the 1940s after Jan Bata met with Hermann Göring in 1938 and was widely accused of being a Nazi sympathiser; the firm was temporarily blacklisted in the USA and UK at the start of the war. Jan did not denounce the Nazi government throughout the war and even advocated the resettling of all Czechoslovak nationals in Patagonia to satisfy *Lebensraum*. Eventually he relocated to Brazil in 1942 and unsuccessfully tried to build another company village. Thomas Bata, an active anti-Nazi, later maintained his uncle was not a fascist.[267]

After initially refusing to deal with unions and the Ministry of Labour's negotiator, Bata's directors started high-level discussions with the TUC's general secretary, the politically

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[263] *Shoe and Leather News* (16 September 1937); *Bata Record* (17 September 1937); Interview with Albert Fairbairn (28 November 1985, ERO SA 3/410/1).
[264] *Tribune* (7 October 1937).
[265] TUC, Bata Dispute 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3).
[266] *Hide and Leather* (USA) (19 October 1935); *Bata Record* (17 September 1937).
[267] Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 140-45.

moderate Walter Citrine, in December 1937.[268] This was probably motivated because of reputational loss and not business disruption. Nonetheless, Schmidt – allegedly described by Edward Spears' secretary as 'not straight' and 'a coward' – was keen to frustrate the process. A meeting between Jan Bata and Citrine in February 1938 yielded no results, but as the TUC maintained pressure and the workforce at East Tilbury reportedly grew restless, eventually a compromise was reached in May 1938 that favoured the NUBSO. The agreement ensured British Bata recognised the NUBSO and would not obstruct membership, implemented ratios of juveniles to adults, guaranteed equal pay for equal work and conformed with all other aspects of the national agreement.[269] Although not a closed shop, the firm gradually re-employed most of the strikers and, significantly, democratised the MAC. By November 1939 the MAC committee was entirely elected by 'workers', with management and middle management banned from sitting on the committee, and seats were proportionately allocated by gender.[270]

The culmination of the strike and East Tilbury's wartime experiences resulted in a partial shift away from the autocracy that had characterised the early village. In 'winning the war for democracy', it reasoned, workers deserved 'a share in the final triumph.'[271] In March 1945, British Bata accepted another two key union demands: arbitration boards with directly elected members and greater transparency.[272] The initial years after the war were characterised by a reduction in working hours, wage increases, a relaxation of strict timekeeping, regular union meetings at East Tilbury, elected shop stewards, a slowing of the pace of production, and a

[268] NUBSO, Council Minutes (June 1937); *Shoe and Leather News* (11 November 1937).
[269] TUC, Bata Dispute 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3); NUBSO, Council Minutes (March, June 1938).
[270] NUBSO, Council Minutes (April, June 1939); *Bata Record* (26 May, 7 July, 10 November 1939).
[271] *Bata Record* (24 December 1941).
[272] NUBSO, Council Minutes (March 1945).

partial end to wage reductions for faulty work. The union was even authorised to collect membership fees during working hours. These achievements, the NUBSO reasoned, were 'entirely due to the coherence created by the unifying influence of our trade union' and were 'a novel experience' for Bata management, which was not used to compromise.[273] While the company continued most of its systems of surveillance and social control, the strong union presence provided a democratic counterweight that exposed the contradictions inherent in Bata's claim that it unified class interests.

Whose Democracy? In Search of a New Jerusalem

If utopianism symbolises broader criticisms and ambitions for society, then the experiences of these communities in the mid-late 1930s provides evidence of a shift towards a more egalitarian, democratic society which would culminate in Labour's 1945 landslide election win. Historians have contested the origins of this shift. Interwar Britain was a democracy, particularly after 1928, but as Ross McKibbin questioned, 'whose democracy was it?' For McKibbin it was one that 'enthroned the middle class': much like East Tilbury and Silver End, it was 'modern', hierarchical, individualistic and strongly anti-socialist. An 'intense middle-class consciousness' characterised the period, supported by the upper- and upper-working class, and unified by Stanley Baldwin's constitutional conservatism, a fear of socialism and the need for political stability. By the mid-1920s the organised working class were comprehensively beaten, and this only deepened by the early 1930s with the failure and fragmentation of the Labour Party. For McKibbin and Selina Todd, it was the Second World War that fundamentally altered this anti-socialist consensus, particularly after 1940 when Labour entered the wartime

[273] *Ibid* (July 1945-November 1948).

coalition. The war boosted Labour's credibility and universalised the working-class experience, resulting in its integration into the 'moral consensus' of the nation. The working class was no longer thought of as potentially dangerous and disloyal but 'The People', as the middle class had been before the war.[274]

Undoubtedly the war was instrumental in Labour's victory, but some historians have recently argued that the result should be traced back to the mid-1930s. Although it is broadly accepted interwar popular culture was dominated by a growing middle, this was gradually changing in the 1930s.[275] Helen McCarthy maintained civil society was more 'democratised' in the 1930s than McKibbin depicted, with the increasing popularity of the Left Book Club, League of Nations Union, support for republican Spain and other democratic organisations that demonstrated a growing political culture that was not anti-socialist. In these organisations it is possible to see the origins of the post-war social democracy which upheld political liberalism but limited the extremes of capitalism.[276] Added to this was the role of the *Daily Mirror*, which as Adrian Bingham and Martin Pugh have explained, transformed itself from a centre-right paper read largely by middle-class women into 'the first modern tabloid' that appealed to the non-unionised working class with powerful left-wing messages. Between 1935 and 1939 its circulation rose by over two-thirds, and probably made 'a significant contribution to the leftwards shift of opinion leading up to the 1945 general election.'[277] After 1931 trade union membership also sharply increased, and the Labour Party's share of the vote in 1935 rose to

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[274] McKibbin, *Ideologies of Class*, 529-92; *Parties and People*; *Classes and Cultures*, 527-35; Todd, *The People*, 120-47. See Helen McCarthy, 'Whose Democracy? Histories of British Political Culture Between the Wars', *The Historical Journal* 55.1 (2012), 221-38.
[275] D. LeMahieu, A *Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and Cultivated Mind in Britain Between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988); Adrian Bingham, 'Representing the people? The Daily Mirror, class and political culture in interwar Britain', in Beers and Thomas (eds.), *Brave New World*, 109-128.
[276] McCarthy, 'Whose Democracy?', 221-38.
[277] Bingham, 'Representing the people?', in Beers and Thomas (eds.), *Brave New World*, 109-128; Martin Pugh, 'The Daily Mirror and the revival of Labour, 1935-45', *Twentieth Century British History* 9:3 (1998), 420-438.

38%, from just 31% in 1931.[278] Increasingly, an interventionist state was not viewed as oppressive but as an agent of democracy and liberty: a vehicle for establishing a 'moral economy.' That was only strengthened by Britain's victory over fascist dictatorships.[279] This shift was not unique to Britain, of course. Social democratic parties won power in most of western Europe after the war: the experiences of two world wars, the growing threat of Bolshevism, and the failure of interwar reconstruction restricted the political and ideological appeal of economic liberalism.[280]

East Tilbury and Silver End were no exception, and epitomise this shift in opinion. The resistance in these villages to perceived corporate autocracy, inequality and injustice signalled that from the mid-1930s, the age of mass democracy and mass unemployment, capitalist utopianism was being dismantled even in settlements meant to champion it. Despite the Labour Party's fracturing in 1931, from the early 1930s the party's fortunes improved in Essex. The small towns and villages of the county were not typically bastions of socialism, but the number of Labour councillors and aldermen steadily grew in the decade, and by 1937 the party claimed around a quarter of county seats. By 1946 it had a sizeable majority in the county council (almost 60% of seats) on an agenda that prioritised public housing, state welfare, education, health spending and economic 'fairness.'[281] Perhaps it was unsurprising that coalminer Bert Coombes' autobiography *These Poor Hands* (1939) was an instant bestseller: its powerful moral charge against liberal capitalism and his experience of living in an exploitative company village captured the mood of the nation.[282]

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[278] Edgerton, *Rise and Fall*, 205-14.
[279] Catterall, *Labour and the Free Churches*, 56, 115, 192-6, 218; Todd, *The People*, 120-25.
[280] Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, 30, 416-468.
[281] John Gyford, 'County Government and Labour Politics in Essex, 1930-1965', *Local Government Studies* 16:6 (1989), 37-48.
[282] B.L. Coombes, *These Poor Hands* (Victor Gollancz, 1939).

This shift in public opinion was unveiled to the whole nation in 1942 when Tom Driberg – a 37-year-old journalist (better known as gossip columnist 'William Hickey' in the *Daily Express*), former communist and Bradwell-on-Sea farmer – was elected as Maldon's MP. At the centre of his by-election campaign, both politically and geographically, was Silver End. A year earlier, George Orwell had optimistically (but quite accurately) foreseen a socialist and distinctly English 'revolution' – a shift in power relations that he thought had started in the 1930s and gathered momentum after Dunkirk. The war had exposed not only the inefficiency and injustice of capitalism but the inequality of sacrifice, he claimed. As such, 'ordinary people' needed 'some proof that a better life is ahead for themselves and their children', which was being achieved through 'a conscious revolt against […] class privilege.'[283] These were themes passionately embraced by Driberg when stumping in Braintree, Maldon, Silver End and Witham. A powerful and eloquent public speaker, he avidly supported Churchill's wartime leadership but also asked the people of Essex: 'do you and I want another 1918? Do we want the next 20 years to be as bad the 20 years between the wars?' Just as Labour would in 1945, Driberg claimed the war must be won 'to usher in the century of the common people' through a 'people's peace.' The promise of greater industrial democracy, 'full and free education', improved meritocracy by ending 'old school tie' employment, nationalisation of key industries and reducing economic inequality would win both the war and the peace.[284] Although the Maldon Constituency Labour Party reluctantly adhered to the wartime political truce and supported the coalition government's candidate Rueben Hunt, a wealthy landowner and industrialist – or 'the worst kind of Tory […] [a] squire and industrialist' as Father Jack Boggis of Bocking put it – many temporarily left the party (like Boggis) or privately supported Driberg.

[283] Orwell, 'The Lion and the Unicorn', in Orwell, *Essays*, 138-88.
[284] Ken Cuthbe records (ERO A8184); Paul Rusiecki, *Under Fire: Essex and the Second World War* (Hatfield: Essex Publications, 2015), 129-41.

The latter included all Silver End councillors. Driberg won the seat with a majority of 5,993 votes; in a largely agricultural and safe Conservative seat (in 1935, a majority of 7,808), this was sensational and foreshadowed what was to come in peacetime.[285]

While Driberg's dynamism, criticism of Tobruk and frustration at the war effort played a significant part in his victory, there is no doubting the appeal of a more egalitarian post-war settlement galvanised his campaign. That year signalled a turning point in the political economy of the nation. Sales of the Beveridge Report – which outlined a post-war assault on the 'five giants' of squalor, want, ignorance, disease and idleness – reached a remarkable 630,000.[286] Faced with electing a deeply conservative candidate in Hunt, the public chose to reject economic liberalism. In the months leading up to the by-election the Conservatives lost three other seats, and the fact that Driberg extended his majority in 1945 (to 7,727) while still an independent, joining the Labour Party in 1946, is indicative of how far public opinion had shifted. By 1946, 22 of the 26 constituencies in Essex were held by left-wing MPs – drawing support from villages and towns throughout the county, as Labour captured 48% of the electorate.[287] Labour also claimed a strong mandate over the County Council as well as Witham and Thurrock councils.[288] The party's commitment to partial economic planning, full employment, the 'welfare state' and state housing – also reluctantly supported by some Conservatives – was built on the raw emotional legacy of the interwar period and wartime sacrifices. Support for educational reform and progressive taxation also indicated the ideological struggle over social justice had decidedly shifted towards democratic egalitarianism. The sense that individual success within a capitalist society was based not on

[285] *Maldon Labour Party: Fifty Years*; Rusiecki, *Under Fire*, 127-36.
[286] David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-1951* (Bloomsbury, 2008), 20-21.
[287] Rusiecki, *Under Fire*, 127-41.
[288] *Essex Weekly News* (5 April 1946); Gyford, 'Labour Politics in Essex, 1930-1965', 38-40.

merit but luck and privilege was broadly shared.[289] Symbolically, Edward Spears also lost his seat in 1945, the same year that Bata's eastern enterprise was nationalised by the Czech government.[290] Labour's victory meant a new utopianism took hold of Essex, Britain and much of Western Europe – one that incorporated socialist critiques and socialist enclaves within capitalism, a New Jerusalem that sought to abandon the belief that unregulated private enterprise could comprehensively tackle society's ills, as interwar reconstruction had brutally exposed. After 1945 liberal capitalism, and capitalist utopianism, was ideologically discredited for a generation in Britain, and with it went the utopianism of East Tilbury and Silver End, Britain's last company villages.

[289] Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, 23-27, 40-57, 437.
[290] Steinführer, 'Stadt und Utopie', 46.

Conclusion

How should we understand the rise and fall of capitalist utopianism between the wars? How should we understand the history of these these villages? Company settlements, of course, have chequered legacies and it is only right that the history of perhaps the most ambitious and 'utopian' of them, East Tilbury and Silver End, should acknowledge the good and the bad. In many respects, these 'modern utopias' did improve the living standards of residents and workers, but they also failed on their own terms. Liberty and self-determination may have been championed, but for the most part these were socially static and repressive atmospheres where acquiescence was engineered in hundreds of small ways. Technological utopianism was thought to bring universal opulence, but often resulted in workers labouring more intensely, living in uniform and misleadingly 'modern' houses where almost every aspect of their lives was closely watched. Social justice was lauded, but class 'unity' was forcefully engineered, and the emptiness of this idealism was openly exposed from the mid-1930s. Capitalist utopianism, as outlined in chapter one, ultimately aimed to pacify more than it did inspire. It was certainly more benign than its fascist and communist counterparts in Europe, although perhaps not in Britain's vast colonies where its compulsion was felt much more severely. After all, utopia is 'no-place', and it would be fair to say capitalist social dreaming at East Tilbury and Silver End lived up to its namesake. 'Utopia's deepest subject, and the source of all that is most vibrantly political about it, is precisely our inability to conceive it,' Frederic Jameson wrote, 'our incapacity to produce it as a vision.' Utopia may be a pole star to reach for, but that star is not static, and neither was capitalist utopianism. If it was fixed, then these villages would have been far more 'tyrannical', dystopian even, than the often anti-utopian experiences of life in

these intentional communities.[1] Unlike later capitalist utopians like Robert Nozick, who maintained capitalist utopianism was the foundation for many different utopias to co-exist, perhaps the biggest problem with these villages was the exact opposite: they were *one family's* vision of utopia autocratically imposed on a disenfranchised people, and fell short of creating a pluralist 'meta-utopia.'[2] Their reimagining was inevitable.

East Tilbury and Silver End were not only Britain's last company villages but also the last hurrah for liberal capitalist utopianism, an ideology that was marginalised for a generation after 1945 despite the influence of Ayn Rand, Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek. Capitalist utopianism serves as a mirror for (conservative) interwar anxieties and ambitions, but also as a warning. Fundamentally, the model that British Bata and the Crittall Manufacturing Company (CMC) provided, one championed by a variety of authors in the interwar years to varying degrees, was never scalable. 'The usefulness of "real utopias" as institutional models for an alternative future depends on how we read them as prefigurative practices,' Ruth Levitas notes, 'including whether and how we imagine them scaled up.'[3] Liberalism relied on the actions (and selfishness) of individuals and corporations; these company villages never proved profitable enough to provide a widely replicable model. Wartime experiences only fuelled the forceful denouncement of privilege and a yearning for a universal egalitarianism. What followed was a 'political-ideological transformation' as western nations turned against fundamental aspects of the 'market society' and created, as Thomas Piketty has put it, a 'capitalism without capitalists' after 1945.[4]

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[1] Fredric Jameson, 'Of Islands and Trenches: Naturalization and the Production of Utopian Discourse', *Diacritics* 7:2 (1977), 16-21.
[2] Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 297-334.
[3] Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society* (Palgrave, 2013), 145.
[4] Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*, 168-73; *Capital and Ideology*, 416-68.

The deep emotional legacy of the interwar years – its dole queues, hunger marches, slum housing and social insecurities – was built upon this failed liberal idealism, which was systematically dismantled after the Second World War. As outlined in chapter two, many companies attempted to rectify these defects within liberal capitalism through industrial welfare, which provides an important reason for Britain's relative interwar stability. These policies were adopted not only because they were thought to pay for themselves (rejecting any presumption they were philanthropic), but because they ensured a far greater 'enmeshment' of their workforces as a means of promoting corporate consciousness, as discussed in chapter four. Welfare capitalism, and this enmeshment, was epitomised in these villages which attempted to foster a unity of class interests, through both sophisticated and crude social engineering. Not only did this attempt to generate 'spontaneous' consent for the political economy and capitalist utopianism, but a spontaneous ardour that misleadingly claimed to empower male wage earners and elevate them to the status of capitalist.

After the war, no longer was the security, health and wellbeing of British citizens subject to the fortune of an 'enlightened' employer, whose motive in providing welfare was profit. State intervention was hardly questioned, and Labour's economic programme unsurprisingly proved popular. Liberalism had been completely discredited, and the belief that unfettered capitalism was unfair and unpredictable was widely shared. Nobody wanted a return to the 'bad old days.' The privatised prototypes of the welfare state established at East Tilbury and Silver End would eventually see universalisation on a national scale but, crucially, the expansion of state welfare would come to undermine corporate enmeshment and employers' hold on their workforces.[5] And nowhere was this triumph more complete than in Essex, where Labour won almost every

[5] Kynaston , *Austerity Britain*, 20-27, 54-57, 142-49.

seat in 1945 and, symbolic for these 'utopian' villages, gained control over Thurrock and Witham local councils.[6] Significantly, the year the National Health Service (1948) was founded also marked the collapse of the influential Anti-Socialist Union.[7] The discourse on meritocratic social mobility continued, of course, but it was now largely championed by the left through government intervention, and not by the right through free-acting corporations. The rhetoric surrounding economic self-determination, it was argued, only ever maximised the liberty of the wealthy. 'The freest development of the individual is frustrated because he or she does not happen to have wealthy families or gambler's luck', Tom Driberg argued in 1945, 'the vagaries of industrial capitalism can reduce millions of human beings into a condition of anxiety and hunger from which no amount of "enterprise" or "initiative" will enable them to rise.' As he later put it in 1950, when successfully defending his Maldon seat, government intervention was not designed to restrict liberty but maximise it, as 'freedom must include freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom from hunger […] this is where the government has to step in, to "interfere" and to "control" – to safeguard fair shares for all by restricting some freedom of those who have had too much wealth and power.'[8]

It was not only the concept of meritocracy (despite Labour's failings here) that transitioned from right to left, but also technological utopianism and the creation of intentional communities. As discussed in chapter three, technocratic and technological utopianism were widespread between the wars and particularly championed by idealists on the political right. This often-superficial fetishisation of technology and scientific management was embodied at East Tilbury and Silver End, but arguably did little to improve the everyday lives of worker-

[6] *Essex Weekly News* (5 April 1946); Gyford, 'Labour Politics in Essex', 38-39.
[7] K.D. Brown, 'The Anti-Socialist Union 1908-1949' in Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History* (Palgrave, 1974), 234-61.
[8] Ken Cuthbe records (Essex Record Office (ERO), Chelmsford, A8184).

residents (even if it improved profits). After the war, Labour grasped the rhetoric of this social dreaming: 'we have been the dreamers, we have been the sufferers, now we are the builders', as Nye Bevan put it. The party not only embraced technocratic economic planning, albeit modest and largely democratic in practice, and promoted greater mechanisation of industry and agriculture, but also oversaw an unprecedented expansion in public housing. By September 1948, 750,000 homes had been built (almost half of them permanent), a remarkable feat in the face of the debt crisis and labour and material shortages.[9] It heralded in a new era of 'British capitalism': autarkic, inward-facing, nationalist and highly successful, it was a capitalism untethered from a discredited economic liberalism championed by the elites, and one that incorporated socialist elements.[10]

Wartime and postwar governments also occasionally appropriated the modern aesthetic. Over 3,000 modernistic homes were built before 1945 on estates for war workers, as concrete flat roofs were thought to offer greater protection during air raids, which was considerably more than those built privately between the wars.[11] New Towns, too, greatly expanded what had been pioneered at East Tilbury and Silver End but, again, the state replaced the 'enlightened' employer. Self-contained garden cities that attempted to rebalance town and county, which were built rapidly to a master plan with deliberate class mixing and emphasis on community (unlike interwar municipal estates) had, of course, two clear precedents but never to this scale. Although the initial wave of these towns, built between 1946 and 1950, were overwhelmingly vernacular in style, later new towns like Milton Keynes embraced what Guy Ortolano has called 'welfare state modernism.' Although the architectural style was never the exclusive reserve of

[9] Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 90-105; Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, 47-48, 64, 129-38, 154-69.
[10] Edgerton, *Rise and Fall*, 253-401.
[11] Jensen, *Modernist Semis*, 49-65.

any single political position, modernism has since been associated with the political left in Britain, unlike between the wars.[12] What had once been popularly thought of as the architecture of capitalism later emerged the 'an architecture of social service', as Alan Powers has put it.[13] These were municipal Jerusalems. Out went the monopolised corporate control, autocratic governance (for the most part), surveillance networks and centralised factory sites. This was utopianism in a new form but using old models, and proved to be extremely popular. New Towns, many built in Essex, aimed to provide for the 'general needs' of the population, even if residents were still screened and selected to some extent.[14] As Labour MP Lewis Silkin put it when pioneering the Town and Country Planning Act, 'it is not unreasonable to expect that the utopia of 1516 should be translated into practical reality in 1946.'[15]

As discussed in chapter five, the origins of this post-war reconstruction can be traced back to the mid-1930s, as witnessed in the struggle against corporate autocracy in these two villages. This chapter outlined the contradictions and failures of both capitalism and capitalist utopianism in these years, as seen in these two settlements, and stressed the agency of workers and residents in dismantling much of these authoritarian experiments. In challenging corporate autocracy, it demonstrated how the origins of the Labour Party's 1945 landslide can be viewed through the lens of social injustice and the interwar failure of capitalism. Nevertheless, British Bata and the CMC were, of course, not transformed instantly and issues continued to plague their labour relations. In 1943, workers at Crittall factories – then producing 25-pound shells, ammunition boxes, portable bridges and pontoons – walked out

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[12] Ortolano, *Thatcher's Progress*, 7, 111-16.
[13] Powers, *Modern Movement*, 37-39.
[14] Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 62-88; Pierre Merlin, 'The New Town Movement in Europe', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 451 (1980), 76-85; A.E.J. Morris, 'History of Urban Form: From Garden Cities to New Towns', *Official Architecture and Planning* 34:12 (1971), 922-25.
[15] Quoted in Darley, *Excellent Essex*, 120-23.

due to excessive supervision, including accusations that the firm timed women in the toilets.[16] At British Bata, the firm dragged its heels on the reinstatement of strikers for years, wages were found to slip below the agreed minimum at times, and the agreed improvements in the ratio of juveniles to adults was quietly shelved.[17] Throughout the war years unions accused British Bata of underpaying staff, obstructing union membership, 'lying' and stalling in negotiations, poor working conditions, and dismissing, 'victimising' and intimidating union members.[18] Nonetheless, union activity and membership increased and despite the disruption and high labour turnover around one-third of the workforce was unionised by 1946.[19] The directly elected Management Advisory Committee, too, significantly improved life for operatives and worker-residents. It challenged the firm on its lack of transparency and successfully improved wages, reinstated break times, increased rewards for night workers and bettered factory safety.[20] 'When they first opened the factory, they were terrible to you', one forewoman recalled, 'but it gradually got better and better, especially when the union got in there.'[21] These achievements were followed by further democratisation and egalitarianism. A new fully elected body, the 'Bata Community', was launched in June 1939 to oversee social and benevolent activities at East Tilbury: the fact that 92% of workers voted in its first election, and no senior manager was elected, was indicative of a strong desire for greater independence. The Bata Community worked tirelessly to raise money and send care packages to employees serving in the armed forces during the war.[22]

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[16] Blake, *Window Vision*, 80-83; Rusiecki, *Under Fire*, 81-90.
[17] National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives (NUBSO), Council Minutes (January-July 1939, Modern Records Centre (MRC), University of Warwick, 547/D/1/1/).
[18] *Ibid* (June 1939-February 1945).
[19] *Ibid* (February, April 1939, December 1946).
[20] *Bata Record* (7 June, 1 December 1939, 31 May, 29 November 1940, 21 March 1941).
[21] Interview with Mrs Bone (ERO SA 3/404/1).
[22] *Bata Record* (30 June 1939, 25 July 1941).

British Bata and the CMC's authoritarianism was undoubtedly reduced before the war, but it was simply untenable during it. British Bata could hardly justify its genuine opposition to Nazism, especially after the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, and operate its own dictatorship at East Tilbury. Not only was the firm crucial to the war effort, having secured government contracts for socks and army boots, but dozens of former employees were killed or captured.[23] East Tilbury was regularly under the Luftwaffe's flight path and although not a target itself, the village was bombed on occasion and production often stopped due to air raids.[24] Social institutions in the village were dismantled or appropriated for the war effort, like the ballroom which became temporary accommodation. These acts were symbolic of a wartime transition from a philosophy that prized individualism, materialism and corporate control, to a more egalitarian, community-focused and democratic post-war Britain. The rhetoric of corporate consciousness, which appealed to workers' presupposed yearning for social mobility and material gain, was replaced by the language of patriotism and shared struggle. Efficiency and punctuality were needed 'for the love of liberty' and to 'beat Hitler', not for personal gain and company profits.[25] The war also exposed the fractured leadership of the company. As Jan Bata and Victor Schmidt left for Brazil, a form of self-imposed exile, and continued to trade with Nazi Germany, British Bata gained autonomy from its parent company. Its leadership enthusiastically supported the allied cause. Edward Spears, a vocal Tory opponent of appeasement, was promoted to major general and appointed as Churchill's personal representative to the French government in exile.[26] Thomas Bata, meanwhile, left for Canada and formed a new colony with Czech expatriates, also contributing to the war effort.

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[23] *Ibid* (21 June, 16 August 1939, 16 May, 10 October 1940).
[24] *Ibid* (25 October, 21 November 1940).
[25] *Ibid* (7 June, 4 October 1940, 26 September 1941).
[26] *Ibid* (22 November 1935, 8 April 1939, 31 May 1940, 3 January 1941).

Thomas gradually wrestled formal control of the company from his uncle after the war.[27] Nonetheless, Labour turnover continued to plague the firm after the war, especially for women and girls; those leaving usually said it was because of poor working conditions.[28]

These ongoing issues came to a head in early 1952, when British Bata's unfavourable treatment of workers (then around 2,500) was once again thrust into the public eye. This time it was its tied-cottage system that was put on public trial when four men, three of them ex-servicemen, were sacked 'without warning or explanation' and their families forcibly evicted from East Tilbury in the winter months. The fight against Bata's 'feudalism' gathered considerable attention in left-wing tabloids and was supported by constituency Labour parties, the Communist Party, unions and 'hundreds' of Tilbury dockers. One house was even fortified and barricaded by dockers, who dug a makeshift trench to obstruct the tenants' removal. Other local unionised workforces, representing a reported 30,000 workers, supported the movement through 'great demonstrations' and political pressure, in what *Daily Worker* reporter Malcolm MacEwen claimed was 'one of the most remarkable solidarity campaigns in British working-class history.' The support resulted in a partial victory – in the rehousing of the families nearby – but more significantly it highlighted the cruelty of the tied cottage system. The company's hegemony over the settlement was no longer unchallenged even if residents' ability to resist the firm was limited.[29] Although the Labour Party had long condemned tied cottages for 'undermining the worker's sense of independence and […] giving the employer a power which […] induces influences, social and political, quite extraneous to normal employment relations',

[27] Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 47-77, 160. Formal ownership was not fully concluded until 1966.
[28] British Bata Staff Register 1933-1952 (Bata Heritage Centre, East Tilbury); TUC, British Bata Dispute 1937-1943 (MRC MSS.292/253.19/3); NUBSO, Circulars 1937-1952 (MRC 547/D/2).
[29] MacEwen, *Bata Story*; Harry Pollitt, *Britain Arise* (Farleigh Press, 1952).

after the war plans to abolish them were quietly dropped.[30] Even so, Nye Bevan denied Bata planning permission in 1946 – the same year US coalminer Merle Travis wrote the hit song 'Sixteen Tons' – due to its conditions, but ultimately more houses were built in East Tilbury after the war (174 between 1949 and 1966).[31]

There is no doubt, however, that firm's utopianism dissipated after the war. While some construction continued, with modernism eschewed, its commitment to building isolated, self-contained company 'utopias' was abandoned, and with it the strength of its paternalism and systematic enmeshment also diminished. By the 1960s less than 15% of the workforce lived in East Tilbury, by which point management had long since left the village.[32] This amounted to a 'radical change' in Bata's 'architectural and social philosophy' according to Jane Pavitt.[33] That is not to say the 'shoemaker to the world' did not flourish, particularly in England, but the prosperity of British Bata after 1945 was used to rebuild the multidomestic business, not its utopianism. Where it lost factories in Central and Eastern Europe, South East Asia and Australasia, and all its continental European factories were damaged or destroyed (except Switzerland), British Bata thrived and grew extremely profitable on wartime contracts. After the war Bata's head office was moved to East Tilbury, and then London, and British Bata financed the company's expansion into Africa and Asia.[34] By the early 1950s it was Britain's largest footwear manufacturer, with around 3,000 employed at East Tilbury producing over four million pairs a year. It was also Britain's largest exporter of footwear, and by 1964 (then employing 7,000 across the country) it had 300 retail outlets.[35] At its post-war height Bata was

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[30] *Essex Farmers' Journal* (October 1932); Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, 169.
[31] Trades Union Congress, Tied Houses 1949-1955 (MRC MSS.292/835.1/2).
[32] Rumsey, *Bata Factory*.
[33] Jane Pavitt, 'Bata Project', 34-41.
[34] Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 77-97.
[35] British Bata, *The Story of British Bata* (Thurrock, 1954); Bata Information Centre, 'Great Britain' (http://world.tomasbata.org/europe/great-britain/ accessed 7 November 2019).

the largest footwear producer in the world, employing around 40,000 and producing 300 million pairs of shoes annually.[36] But faced with greater competition in Britain from European and South East Asian imports from the 1960s, the firm began to decline in the 1970s. After 1970 it sold its subsidiaries and smaller factories in Britain, its housing and farms at East Tilbury, as well as land which was used for a large private development. The technical college and swimming pool were demolished, and in 1982 Community House was sold and converted into flats.[37] As it lost its technical and marketing lead, production also sharply fell at East Tilbury. Between 1979 and 1982 the workforce halved, to less than 1,000, as the firm prioritised production overseas and sold its British retail arm. The company folded in 2006, and most of its former factories in East Tilbury now stand empty.[38] Ironically, the liberalism that gave birth to British Bata and East Tilbury was also the reason for their decline 50 years later.

The CMC was less successful after the war. Due to the high cost of steel, some failed ventures, the nationalisation of its rolling mills in 1949 and poor export demand it struggled throughout the latter 1940s. Production improved in the 1950s but by this point, with the quota system still in place, modest pay rates and the deaths of Walter (1956) and Valentine (1961), the company's utopianism had abated.[39] Although Silver End continued to function as a company village into the 1960s, it was 'several decades past its high summer of innovation, collectivism and self-sufficiency', as Susan King put it. Four mergers took place between 1965 and 1975, by which time Silver End was sold off in plots ('with complete disregard to what it stood for or its history' according to resident Carol De-Coverley) and newer houses started to outnumber the

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[36] *The Times* (9 September 2008).
[37] *The Guardian* (5 February 1983); Bata, *Shoemaker to the World*, 168-70; Bata Information Centre, 'Great Britain' (http://world.tomasbata.org/europe/great-britain/ accessed 7 November 2019).
[38] Smith, *East Tilbury Appraisal*, 16-17; House of Commons 32 (26 November 1982, https://hansard.parliament.uk/).
[39] Blake, *Window Vision*, 84-95; Crosby, 'Silver End Model Village', 73.

originals. In 1968, after a merger with Slater Walker, the company sold Silver End and its 478 homes to Witham Urban District Council.[40] The sale of Silver End and East Tilbury ended Britain's era of utopian company villages. The firm, dissociated with the Crittall family, continues to trade from Witham at a fraction of its former size, and the factory site at Silver End has been unoccupied since 2006.

The history and social memory of these villages have been admirably kept alive by the Bata Heritage Centre and Silver End Heritage Society, but there is no doubt that as the companies retreated from these villages, deindustrialisation brought with it social alienation and a loss of community consciousness. Physically, both are still unlike any other village in England, but their rusting factories are testament to the erasure of these unique, understudied and underappreciated 'invisible' utopias. Nonetheless, 'to study futures we need to focus on the unfilmed treatments, the unfinished novels, the unexploited patent, policies not adopted', David Edgerton writes, 'we need to open up an archive of failure.'[41] So too with these villages. While they declined into relative obscurity, capitalist utopianism was revived and reinvented by the political right even if it remains obscured and in need of considerable further research. Where New Lanark and Saltaire are UNESCO World Heritage Sites these villages, lamentably, are part of England's 'heritage at risk' and are under significant development pressure. They deserve greater recognition and preservation as monuments to a utopianism that shaped the history of England, and an ideology that still transforms it.

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[40] *Guardian* (15 August 1968); Crosby, 'Silver End Model Village', 73; De-Coverley, *Silver End Memories*, 30; King, *Guv'nor's Village*, 12-15.
[41] Edgerton, *Rise and Fall*, 175.

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