



SOURCES FOR COLONIAL AND COMMONWEALTH HISTORY IN THE TUC LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

The TUC Library Collections, established in 1922, transferred to the London Metropolitan University in 1996. The core areas of the Library are reference and historical works on the trade union movement, union publications from the UK and overseas, documents relating to working conditions and industrial relations in various industries and countries, and material collected from the various campaigns and policy areas in which the TUC has been involved since its foundation in 1868. Most overseas material dates from the foundation of the International Federation of Trade Unions in 1913 and the collection of information from colonial and other international political and labour movements expanded with the establishment of the TUC International Committee in 1921 and its Colonial Advisory Committee in 1937. The TUC continues to deposit material on an annual basis

The Collections hold the printed publications of the TUC, its affiliated unions, and overseas organisations with which it has been in contact. They also hold collections from the Labour Party (including the British Commonwealth Labour Conferences from 1925), Communist Party and other relevant political groups and campaigns, eg the Fabian Colonial Bureau, League against Imperialism. Also held are the publications of various international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation and its regional organisations from 1918, the Commonwealth TUC, trade union internationals (IFTU, ICFTU, WFTU, WCL) and their trade secretariats from 1913, plus papers from the Communist International, Red International of Labour Unions, etc.¹

There are separate files for each of the former colonies and dominions - covering trade unions, labour law, labour market issues, and political, economic and constitutional history, with small special collections on specific events eg the Boer War, Shanghai Disturbances 1925. These files also include official papers relating to political and labour activities in the colonies: conferences, inquiries (eg the Dominions Royal Commission 1912-1917), statistical series, economic surveys, etc. There is also material relating to terms and conditions of those working in the colonial service (including the magazine *Corona*). There is an interesting collection of pamphlets and reports relating to emigration and empire settlement - in particular the publications of the Oversea Settlement Committee from 1919. Pamphlets debating the broader issues of imperialism or colonialism generally post-date 1920 and those on attitudes to Commonwealth immigration and race relations mainly post-date 1960. Runs of overseas periodicals are often incomplete or short-lived as they were dependant on ad hoc exchange agreements or copies brought back by visitors.

The press cuttings collection, dating from c.1910-1970, includes files on individual countries,

¹ Handlists of some of this material may be found in "African trade union material in the Library of the TUC" *African Research & Documentation*, SCOLMA 1977, and "International trade unions: a preliminary checklist of publications" Institute of Development Studies Library, 1974.

mainly concentrating on TUC involvement and personalities. There is an online search form for the cuttings database on the [Collections web page](#) (see below).

Papers belonging to the late **Marjorie Nicholson**, author of *The TUC Overseas: the roots of policy* (1986), which relate to the origins and development of labour and political movements in the ex-colonies, were deposited in 1998. The collection comprises books, pamphlets, press cuttings, and some 200 files relating to specific countries. These files contain printed material, TUC internal documentation, correspondence and other manuscript material. There are also general and national chronologies of events since 1914, and detailed indexes to all her sources. Other relevant Special Collections include the International Federation of Workers' Educational Associations Archive. Catalogues of these Special Collections can be searched online from the [Collections web page](#) (see below)

Other online resources include-

Further details of our holdings on the colonies in the Caribbean area are shown on the **CASBAH** website at www.casbah.ac.uk . There is a separate source note for Caribbean Studies available on the [Collections website](#).

The Union Makes Us Strong at www.unionhistory.info provides some digitised photographs and documents relating to the Colonies and Commonwealth in its *Timeline* section. It also has a fully searchable database of the *Trades Union Congress Annual Reports* 1868-1968.

The Workers War at www.unionhistory.info/workerswar includes some relevant images, documents and oral testimony from Home Front workers during the Second World War.



S. Rhodesia Tailors & Garment Workers Union 1958



Commonwealth union leaders 1956

The TUC Collections are open by appointment only, Monday-Friday 9.15-16.45. Email enquiries should be sent to tuclib@londonmet.ac.uk . Recent acquisitions can be seen on the online catalogue at <http://catalogue.londonmet.ac.uk> , but the majority of documents are only accessible via a card catalogue in the Library. Visitors should note that the TUC Archive, including correspondence files and committee minutes has been deposited in the [Modern Records Centre](#) at the University of Warwick.

TUC Library Collections, London Metropolitan University, Holloway Road Learning Centre, 236 Holloway Road, London N7 6PP . tel: 020 7133 3726 // email: tuclib@londonmet.ac.uk
TUC Collections web page www.londonmet.ac.uk/libraries/tuc

The Union Makes Us Strong : TUC History Online at www.unionhistory.info

The Workers War: Home Front Recalled at www.unionhistory.info/workerswar

Winning Equal Pay : the Value of Women's Work at www.unionhistory.info/equalpay