

# 1741918 HS1868

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SCHOOL OF HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND RELIGION

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| STUDENT No.     | 1741918    | SEMINAR TUTOR | Stephanie Ward                                    |
| MODULE CODE     | HS1868     | MODULE TITLE  | Class, Protest and Politics: South Wales, 1918-39 |
| SUBMISSION DATE | 16/05/2023 | ESSAY TITLE   | Section A: Question 1. Section B: Question 10.    |
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### Section A: Question 1

Recovering the experiences of immigrants in interwar Wales presents challenges to historians, but it is still possible to achieve a certain extent of experiences. Although primary accounts from immigrant groups may exist, they are limited in scope. Historians must rely on the available sources and methods at their disposal to piece together a comprehensive picture of their experiences during this period. By utilising various sources and research techniques, historians can work towards developing an understanding of the interwar experiences of immigrants in Wales. It is important to recognise that the Italian immigrant experience and the Black immigrant experience are two distinct and separate groups, each with their own unique experiences. These groups faced different challenges, opportunities, and forms of discrimination during their immigration and settlement in Wales during the interwar period. By examining these groups separately, historians can gain a more nuanced understanding of the specific experiences, contributions, and impacts of both the Italian and black immigrant communities in Wales. Jaqueline Jenkinson's *Black 1919* (2009) revolved around the race riots of 1919, offering a limited scope on the interwar period. However, within this context, Jenkinson provided a comprehensive examination of the black experience specifically 1919, utilising sources such as newspaper articles, Colonial Office records, and Police records to shed light on this subject. On the other hand, Colin Hughes' *Lime, Lemon & Sarsaparilla* (1991) utilised a range of sources to explore the interwar experience such as oral history methods, official reports, newspapers, and other relevant sources. This multi-faceted approach allowed Hughes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of the immigrant communities during the interwar years, offering valuable insights into their lives, challenges, and contributions. It is worth noting that while Jenkinson's work focuses on a particular event and time frame, Hughes' book takes a broader perspective on the interwar period. Both authors employ different sources and research methods to contribute to the understanding of the immigrant experiences, providing valuable perspectives on the black and Italian immigrant experiences in Wales.

An insightful approach to exploring the black immigrant experience during the interwar period is through articles by The Times. These articles provide valuable historical narrative that shed light on significant events such as the 1919 Race Riots, the influx of black seamen into Cardiff Docks, and the registration scheme for Arabic and Somali

seamen. By examining these articles, historians can gain valuable insights into the challenges, experiences, and interactions of immigrant communities during that time. The articles provide a window into the social dynamics, perceptions, and policies surrounding immigration, as well as the lived experiences of the individuals involved. This method allows historians to piece together a more comprehensive understanding of the immigrant experience in interwar Wales from those who were wary and hold unfavourable attitudes towards this immigrant background, drawing from contemporary sources that documented these important events and developments. To reiterate, these articles are largely negative towards the immigrant experience and do not provide first-hand accounts of the immigrant experiences too, instead they demonstrate the concerns by white workers in the area and project the voice of The Times editorial. Indeed, articles can provide a small extent into the black immigrant experience during the interwar period, particularly when examining specific events such as the race riots. These articles, including those around the time of the Cardiff race riots, can help shed light on the economic and social motivations of the white working-class perpetrators, as well as their concerns about inter-racial relationships and housing shortages (Jenkinson, 2009). Another perspective, that of Alan Llwyd, utilised a range of articles to demonstrate the one-sided approach by the media, Llwyd argued there was frustrations on both sides, and that money attracted women inciting the jealousy of white perpetrators and that the media gave conflicting reports, withholding contextual information (Llwyd, 2005). However, it is crucial to note that relying solely on articles may offer a limited perspective.

Memoirs and oral testimonies are another valuable method that contributes to understanding the immigrant experiences in interwar Wales. These personal accounts provide direct insights into the emotions, perspectives, and lived experiences of individuals who were immigrants during that time. By sharing their first-hand narratives, immigrants offer valuable details and personal reflections that contribute to a more nuanced understanding of their experiences. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this method. Memoirs and oral testimonies may be subjective and influenced by an individual's memory, biases, and personal interpretations. Additionally, not all immigrants may have left memoirs or had their stories recorded, resulting in gaps in the availability of such sources. Nevertheless, when combined with other sources and methods such as official records, newspapers,

and photographs, memoirs and oral testimonies can significantly enrich our understanding of the immigrant experience in interwar Wales. These personal accounts often provide intimate and vivid descriptions that help historians reconstruct the social, economic, and cultural contexts in which immigrants lived.

For example, Hughes' interviews highlighted the economic difficulties faced during the 1926 Miner's Strike, yet the Fulgoni family and their business were able to survive (Hughes, 1991). Moreover, the relaxed setting of Italian cafés and their hospitality provided a social setting for striking miners to gather, share cigarettes, and sing (Chezzi, 2015) (Hughes, 1991). This demonstrates how oral histories can illustrate the economic adaptation and the supportive etiquette of the Italian immigrants towards the striking miners. Chezzi argued that her comprehensive visual history on Italian immigration in the interwar period is often neglected by academics, despite covering important phases of Italian immigration as a continuous dynamic process. Her approach also emphasises how photographs in the Italian context highlight sociability and integration and promote a particular family image that non-Italians seemed to neglect (2015). By considering these visual representations alongside oral histories, a more comprehensive understanding of the Italian immigrant experience can be achieved and is another method that contributes to the recovery of immigrant experiences. In summary, memoirs and oral testimonies provide valuable extent to the insights into the immigrant experiences in interwar Wales. While acknowledging their limitations, such as subjectivity and availability, these personal accounts contribute to a more detailed understanding of immigrant lives. When combined with other sources and methods, they enrich our knowledge of the social, economic, and cultural contexts of immigrants. By bridging personal narratives with visual representations, a comprehensive understanding of the immigrant experience can be achieved.

### **Section B: Question 10**

The 1930s marked a period of tumultuous shifting political trends in Britain, meanwhile the South Wales electorate remained staunch voters of the Labour Party. This demonstration of loyalty during a politically challenging era raised questions about the factors that accounted for the Welsh voting choices. The South Wales coalfields in this period was known for its heavy industrialisation and coal mining industry, becoming a Labour stronghold. The party's advocacy for the working class resonated with the predominantly working-class population. Amidst the Great Depression, the Labour Party's commitment to social reform and improved working conditions provided hope and protection to those affected by economic hardship. The challenges of the 1930s played a role in maintaining Labour support. South Wales faced mine closures, layoffs, and wage reductions, strengthening the appeal of Labour's message of solidarity and workers' rights. The Labour Party's strong organisation and local connections in South Wales further solidified support. Activists and politicians worked closely with the community, addressing concerns, and fostering loyalty, additionally the role of gender roles within the structure of the Labour Party foster support. Additionally, South Wales resisted the rise of extreme ideologies that were gaining traction elsewhere, contributing to the continued support for Labour. These themes will be explored in further detail.

The Labour Party emerged as the political voice of the working class, championing their rights, and advocating for better working conditions in the 1920s. An amalgamation of themes presented the argument for the continued Labour endorsement during the 1930s. This foundation set the stage for the enduring support of Labour during the 1930s. However, an additional significant factor that contributed to this support was the rapid disintegration of the Liberal Party in Wales, which began in the 1920s and solidified by the 1935 election, where they managed to win only 6 seats. Deacon (2005) attributed the disintegration of the Welsh Liberal Party to an internal civil war over socialism, creating a division between right-wing and left-wing factions. This uncertainty and division gave Labour a stronger foothold, presenting a more united image to voters. At the same time, the Welsh Labour grassroots movement grew in influence as activists and politicians engaged with the community and addressed their concerns. The faltering Liberal Party allowed Welsh Labour to attract voters seeking a cohesive and determined political force. The collapse of the

Liberals and the dedicated grassroots work of Welsh Labour supporters were pivotal in sustaining and strengthening Labour's support in 1930s Wales.

Furthering the point of localised grassroots movement, Labour set out to create the South Wales Regional Council of Labour, to maintain in the Regional Area a political Labour Party at a County and Parliamentary Constituency level whose membership would comprise of its members, Trade Unions, and affiliated Socialist Societies (Extracts from the Draft Constitution, 1937). This meant the elected Labour representatives structured themselves to serve their people, giving them a working-class platform to project their voices. Morgan stated this was “the Labour ascendancy, and its representatives, generally lived deeply entrenched in the community from which it had sprung” (1980). The increasing influence employed by this tactic shifted Wales from ‘Liberal Wales’ to one that was markedly ‘Labour’ (Chris Williams, 2000). Whilst typically the men of Labour were shortlisted to run as candidates and face of the party, its female structure also generated support for Labour’s success.

The gendered roles within the party structure generated the attraction of working-class women to vote Labour based on Labour policy and ideology that the women championed. Tanner argued this was created by “broader cultural values- and gendered attitudes- permeated everything that parties did” (2005). The Labour Party in South Wales benefited from a robust network of women's organizations and dedicated female activists. The efforts of influential figures like Elizabeth Andrews played a crucial role in rallying support for the party among women. Andrews, known for her tireless activism, made significant contributions to the Labour movement in South Wales, acting as the bridge between Welsh speaking women in North and Mid-Wales as a translator, building the culture of political engagement and support for Labour. (Elizabeth Andrews, 2006). It was acknowledged, whilst the efforts of the women’s section in the party drummed up support, it also provided a platform for women to accept their position within the home and family life yet “perform a self outside and alongside housewife or mother, for those women without workplace or trade union activity, must be viewed as emotionally fulfilling” (Stephanie Ward, 2019). This idea of women being a part of an element of political cause despite structured on gender further posited the Labour Party as an attractive party to women, further

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reinforcing the reason why voters in south Wales continued to support the Labour Party against British national trends in the 1930s.

In conclusion, the unwavering support of the South Wales electorate for the Labour Party in the 1930s can be attributed to several factors. The region's heavy industrialisation and coal mining industry made it a Labour stronghold, as the party's focus on the working class resonated with the predominantly working-class population. The Great Depression intensified economic hardships, and Labour's commitment to social reform and improved working conditions provided hope and protection. The disintegration of the Liberal Party, driven by an internal civil war over socialism, left Labour as a more united and appealing alternative. The strong grassroots movement and local connections of the Labour Party further solidified support, while the involvement of women and their organisations helped mobilize female voters. These factors combined to sustain and strengthen Labour's support in South Wales, defying national political trends of the time.



## FINAL GRADE

79 / 100

## GENERAL COMMENTS

**Q 1**

This is a rich and thoughtful exam answer. You have an excellent knowledge and understanding of how historians can utilise the available evidence to uncover the lives of immigrants. There is evidence of wide reading and you engage closely with the question in this focused response. I thought the two case studies worked well and you raise important points about how newspapers can be 'read' and the value of oral histories. Some further examples from the historiography might have helped with the analysis of newspapers and there were a few slips in style and structure, but overall a very strong response.

77

**Q 10**

This is a superb exam answer. You consistently show intellectual independence and an outstanding knowledge of the political culture of south Wales in the interwar period. Your introduction shows your understanding of the wider political and economic context, and throughout your answer you are mindful of the impact of the social position of the region. Your argument is persuasive and draws upon a range of thoughtfully chosen examples and evidence. The noting of the South Wales Regional Council of Labour and why the Liberals collapsed was very good indeed. The inclusion of women's position added much to your answer. The essay finishes with an excellent conclusion, well done.

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