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'TO MAKE TWELVE O'CLOCK AT ELEVEN':
THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION.

MARTIN JOHN CRICK.

Submitted to the Council for National Academic Awards
in partial fulfilment of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The Polytechnic
Huddersfield

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I do not promise you glory, I do not
promise you fame, but I do say that
in the days that are coming the memory
of the men and women who lived for
socialism in these dark days will be
revered and honoured.

George Lansbury, 1896.

M. J. Crick. - 'To make twelve o'clock at eleven'. The
history of the Social-Democratic Federation.

The Social-Democratic Federation has been ill-served by historians, dismissed as an irrelevance or an alien intrusion into British politics. This thesis attempts to provide a balanced and coherent account of the SDF's history, emphasising regional as well as national developments to demonstrate that until the early years of the twentieth century, the party posed a genuine alternative to the supposed 'mainstream' development of the ILP/Labour Party. The Federation was far from the monolithic, centralised organisation, dominated by Hyndman, that is often depicted. A study of the branches in Lancashire and Yorkshire reveals regional diversity and demonstrates that they enjoyed considerable autonomy, but although this autonomy allowed branches in areas like Lancashire to adapt to their environment with considerable success it also produced a party prone to internal divisions over strategy. Consequently it failed to develop consistent policies. This proved a fatal handicap at a crucial period in the history of the British Socialist movement, during the formative years of the Labour Party. The SDF was marginalised, preoccupied with its own internal debates at a time when it could have exercised considerable influence inside Labour's ranks. It never satisfactorily resolved the debate over which course to pursue, that of reform or revolution, until the outbreak of the First World War brought the division within the party to a head, which ultimately caused its dissolution. Nevertheless its eventual demise should not obscure its achievements which, as is often the fate of pioneers, remain largely unsung. It educated and agitated; it played a leading role in the formation of both ILP branches and Labour Representation Committees; it produced a generation of working-class intellectuals and militants; it championed the cause of the unemployed. Most important of all, the SDF was responsible for re-introducing Socialism to the British political agenda.

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to type this thesis, took on more than she bargained for. Finally to Sandra, Oliver, and Leon, who have had to live with the Social-Democratic Federation for more years than they care to remember, I dedicate this thesis.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.

The following abbreviations have been used in the text:

BSP.	British Socialist Party.
BWL.	British Workers' League.
CPGB.	Communist Party of Great Britain.
DF.	Democratic Federation.
ILP.	Independent Labour Party.
INL.	Irish National League.
ISB.	International Socialist Bureau.
IWMA.	International Working Mens' Association.
LEL.	Labour Emancipation League.
LRC.	Labour Representation Committee.
MSL.	Manhood Suffrage League.
NAC.	National Administrative Council (of the ILP).
NSP.	National Socialist Party.
NSS.	National Secular Society.
SDF.*	Social-Democratic Federation.
SL.	Socialist League.
SLP.	Socialist Labour Party.
SNDC.	Socialist National Defence Committee.
SPGB.	Socialist Party of Great Britain.
SRC.	Socialist Representation Committee.
TUC.	Trade Union Congress.

* The Social-Democratic Federation changed its name to the Social-Democratic Party in 1906. For the sake of simplicity

the party has been referred to as the SDF throughout,
except in direct quotations, where, after 1906, it appears
as the SDP.

INTRODUCTION

The Social-Democratic Federation 'passed away' on 12 October 1939, little noticed and unmourned. Latterly its function had been little more than to provide 'an annual dinner of veteran right-wing Labour Members of Parliament';¹ it had become an anachronism, an historical curiosity. Henry Pelling's comment that it was 'a rather weedy growth in the political garden',² has been reflected by the treatment the SDF has received from Labour historians. Thus whilst the minuscule organisations of the Socialist League, the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the Socialist Labour Party, secessions from the SDF, have received detailed attention³ the SDF has been incoherently treated and often neglected. David Englander has identified one of the reasons for this: 'The autobiographies of those who made "successful" careers in the trade unions and Labour Party too often pause for a disparaging observation on their SDF experience.'⁴ Yet the Federation was the pioneer organisation of the Socialist revival in the 1880s, the veteran campaigner of the free speech and unemployed agitations, a vital presence at the founding conference of the Labour Representation Committee and, later, an important constituent of the Communist Party. It clearly merits a history of its own.

As Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out the SDF's lack of institutional treatment is partly explicable by the fact that 'The Social-Democratic Federation has long been the problem-child of labour historians... The least subtle student of its affairs is forced into unaccustomed complexities, contradictions

and nuances.'⁵ One result has been a fragmentalisation of its history. Pelling has recorded the early years in his Origins of the Labour Party and Walter Kendall has given a substantial account of the party's progress in the first two decades of the twentieth century in his Revolutionary Movements in Britain 1900-1921. These two works epitomise the problem of 'placing' the SDF. Was it a reformist or a revolutionary grouping? To which tradition did it contribute most? To compartmentalise its history by examining only its role in the Socialist revival, its contribution to the Labour Party, or its place in revolutionary 'mythology', is to ignore the fact that the Social-Democratic Federation had a continuous history over more than fifty years encompassing the vital period of development of the modern British Labour Movement.

The SDF cannot be dismissed lightly. It was the first modern Socialist organisation of national importance in Britain. Marx disliked it, Engels despaired of it, Morris, Burns, Mann and countless others left it, yet it survived. The dissidents established other bodies which either disappeared, like the Socialist League, remained unimportant sects, like the SPGB, or established only regional influence as with the SLP on Clydeside. Meanwhile, the SDF continued as the major British representative of Marxism from the early 1880s until 1916 and thereafter a monument to, and echo of, the movement's past. Survival alone was no mean feat but the party also had its achievements, often obscured by the sheer weight of criticism heaped upon it. It established itself as the major Socialist organisation in several areas, notably London and the cotton

belt of North-East Lancashire, with the result that Marxist theory entered the British Labour tradition. One reason often posited for the failure of the SDF is that its Marxism was 'alien' to native traditions. The exact nature of the SDF's Marxism is debatable, as is the extent to which it penetrated the movement, but that its presence was established and real is indisputable.

The SDF's role in propagandising and popularising Marxism is much underestimated. One of its greatest achievements was that it was a most important school for working-class militants and activists, exercising a disproportionately large influence in relation to its size. It provided groups of cadres or potential cadres, the leaders and the brains, rather than the mass organisations. John Burns, Tom Mann, Will Thorne, George Lansbury, even James MacDonald and Harry Quelch are well known to Labour historians. Yet Ernest Bevin, James Ramsay MacDonald and Margaret Bondfield also received their introduction to Labour politics via the SDF. Equally importantly George Tabbron in Salford, Charles Hurley in Blackburn, Charlie Glyde in Bradford, and countless others who never made the national stage were converted to Socialism by the Federation. Its work and role at a local level is much obscured by a concentration on its national leaders. Thus Chushichi Tsuzuki's H.M. Hyndman and British Socialism fails to provide a full history of the SDF.

The purpose of this thesis is to chronicle the history of the Social-Democratic Federation. The one work which might claim to fulfil that role is the party's official history, Social-

Democracy in Britain, begun by H. W. Lee, its long-serving secretary, and completed by E. Archbold. But this is a flawed account, a blatant apologia, which concludes that the party disappeared because it was successful, its principles having been accepted by the Labour movement in general and the Labour Party in particular; it therefore had no further function to perform. This assumption raises a number of questions. First, had the political philosophy of the SDF been incorporated into that of the Labour Party? Alternatively, was entry into the Labour Party an admission of failure, a recognition that thirty years of Marxist agitation had produced few results? Did the SDF in fact adapt and moderate its own politics as a reaction to its lack of success, until it was eventually indistinguishable from the mainstream of British Socialism? Discussion of these questions should establish the SDF's place on the political spectrum and enable an assessment of its contribution to the development of the British Labour and Socialist Movement. Paul Thompson, in Socialists, Liberals and Labour - The Struggle for London 1885-1914, has disputed the accusation that the SDF's failure stemmed from its importation into Britain of an alien creed. This thesis aims to contribute to this discussion by examining the SDF's ideology. Did the party have a coherent ideology? The number of breakaways from its ranks would suggest not and also, perhaps, a failure to adjust ideology to changing events and to relate theory to practice.

A further controversy arises over party membership. The SDF has been seen primarily as a London organisation, but more recently P. A. Watmough has reminded readers that by the early years of the twentieth century provincial membership had out-

stripped that of London, with Lancashire a more stable base than the capital.⁶ Why did the SDF succeed in some areas and fail in others? What explanation can be advanced for its success in the cotton towns of Lancashire, where Burnley reported a branch of over 1,000 in the 1890s, as opposed to its comparative failure in West Yorkshire? Mere membership figures can be misleading. There were very real difficulties involved in being a member of a Socialist organisation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, victimisation being the most obvious. Many therefore remained, in the words of Robert Blatchford, 'the great unattached', though they were nonetheless influenced by the party. Research has suggested that membership of more than one Socialist organisation was common in the North of England into the twentieth century. The Socialist movement, as Stephen Yeo has reflected, was very much a crusade in its early years, differences being subsumed in enthusiasm for a common cause. Such unity tended to degenerate into factionalism as the new century progressed, particularly as Socialists attempted a modus vivendi with the Labour Party, a very different vehicle for the expression of working-class aspirations from that originally envisaged. Stanley Pierson has seen The Journey from Fantasy to Politics prior to 1910, the postponement of the Socialist goal in favour of more short-term, practical advances, as the turning point in the movement's history.

The above questions have been examined within a chronologic framework to render a coherent account of the SDF's history. Whilst not arguing the existence of a revolutionary situation in

Britain during the life of the SDF it will be suggested that the Federation, against a backcloth of political and social unrest, should have exercised a more considerable influence on British working-class politics. The SDF suffered throughout its history from the lack of a clear identity; there was a dichotomy between its revolutionary phraseology and its increasingly reformist practice which eventually rendered it impotent. Nonetheless, the struggle to establish its presence enabled the SDF to make a contribution to both the theory and practice of the movement which was by no means negligible.

NOTES

1. S. MacIntyre, A Proletarian Science: Marxism in Britain 1917-33, (1980), p.25.
2. H. Pelling, Origins of the Labour Party, (1965), p.172.
3. R. Barltrop, The Monument, The Story of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, (1975); R. Challinor, The Origins of Bolshevism, (1977), is the history of the SLP. The Sociali League's history has been well-documented because of its connections with William Morris and Eleanor Marx. See, for example, E. P. Thompson, William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary, (1977), and Yvonne Kapp, Eleanor Marx, volum II, (1979).
4. D. Englander, The Diary of Fred Knee, (1977), p.7.
5. E. Hobsbawm, 'Hyndman and the SDF', in Labouring Men, (1976 p.231.
6. P. A. Watmough, 'The Membership of the Social Democratic Federation', in Bulletin No. 34 of the Society for the Study of Labour History, Spring 1977, pp.35-41.
7. S. Yeo, 'A New Life : The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896', in History Workshop, issue 4, Autumn 1977.

PART I

THE REVIVAL OF SOCIALISM

INTRODUCTION.

When Henry Mayers Hyndman called a meeting of London Radicals at the Rose Street Club, Soho, on 2 March 1881, he took the first step towards the formation of the Social-Democratic Federation, an organisation which was to be instrumental in the revival of British Socialism. Over thirty years had elapsed since the demise of Chartism as a movement and during those years Labour gave partly apathetic, partly active, adherence to the existing order. This was the golden age of British capitalism, with free trade and individualism the dominant ideologies. As Theodore Rothstein later pointed out, 'Repudiation, not only of revolution, but of politics in general and concentration on purely economic trade union action - this was the main background to the British Labour Movement of the post-Chartist period.'¹ The completeness of the reaction from the revolutionary idealism of the 1830s and 1840s was noted by an old Chartist, Thomas Cooper, touring the North of England in 1869 and 1870. He found the working population there in a far better material condition than thirty years earlier but he 'noticed with pain that their moral and intellectual tradition had deteriorated.' Far from discussing the great doctrines of political justice or Socialism working men now talked of their shares in co-operative stores or building societies and, he noted with scorn,

You will see others, like idiots, leading small
greyhound dogs, covered with cloth, in a string!....
Working men had ceased to think, and wanted to hear
no thoughtful talk- at least it was so with the

greater number of them.²

Whilst one must comprehend the extent of the rupture in the mid-nineteenth century in order to appreciate the difficulties faced by the pioneers of the Socialist revival in the 1880s, nonetheless it would be a truism to suggest that Socialist doctrines could have emerged fully-formed from this period of quiet. The presence of old Chartists such as the Murrays and Townshend at the Rose Street meeting was proof that isolated pockets of radicalism had resisted the spread of reaction. More importantly, from the mid-sixties onwards there were currents of thought and action which contributed to the Socialist revival. The British working class may have been at its most quiescent but in another sense, as Dona Torr has noted, 'The foundations of power were laid.'³

NOTES.

1. T. Rothstein, From Chartism to Labourism, (1983), p.202
2. T. Cooper, The Life of Thomas Cooper, (1886), pp.393-4
3. D. Torr, Tom Mann and His Times. (1956), p.175

CHAPTER 1

A CENTRE OF ORGANISATION.

One legacy of the Chartist period was a strong internationalism within the Labour movement, demonstrated by support for the Northern states in the American civil war, for the Polish insurrection of 1863 and for Garibaldi. The organisers of demonstrations in favour of these causes, men such as Odger, Cremer and Applegarth, were also prominent members of the International Working Men's Association, founded in London in September 1864. The convenors of the meeting may have been British trade unionists but the intellectual inspiration was to be provided by Karl Marx, who aimed to renew Chartism by giving the British working class the theoretical base he believed they lacked. In so doing Marx provided a bridge between Chartism and Socialism in Britain, for at least three of the Council of the IWMA later became members of the Social-Democratic Federation.¹ Moreover, the programme of the British section of the IWMA was almost identical to that of the Democratic Federation. Marxist ideas were not imported into this country in the 1880s but had formed part of the debate within extreme radical circles in the sixties and seventies and were incorporated into the political philosophy of some of the Federation's early converts.

Simultaneously the liberal individualist doctrines dominant in the mid-nineteenth century were under attack from several directions and by 1880 Liberal thought was in the throes of a crisis, a reflection of the growing incapacity of Liberal

governments. Trade depression, unemployment, the Irish question, the war in Egypt, all deepened the discontent of Radical elements in Britain and caused attacks on the orthodox political economy. Yet this assault was the culmination of a century-long cultural struggle to come to terms with the divisions in society created by the industrial revolution. As Stanley Pierson has noted many early recruits to Socialism, largely from the non-industrial middle class, underwent an acute crisis of identity resulting from a clash between their personal ideals and the working of social institutions.² H. W. Nevinson was a typical example: 'To myself', he wrote,

though I naturally belonged to the comfortable classes, the attraction of repulsion was very strong, and during those years my shamed sympathy with working people became an irresistible torment so that I could hardly endure to live in the ordinary comfort of my surroundings.³

This 'divided consciousness' led many to seek new philosophies which could provide them with a meaningful social role. Three currents of nineteenth century thought provided a filter through which many Socialist adherents eventually emerged.

The idea of a 'Christian Commonwealth', which would secure social harmony through common moral feelings, was a strong influence on many British Socialists. However, whether it was expressed by Coleridge, Thomas Arnold, or the Christian Socialists it was a conservative force, arguing the need not for a new system

but for the old to exhibit its true function and energies. Two thinkers played a major part in the translation of Christian ideals of community into Socialist forms, and their influence was later acknowledged by many Socialists. Carlyle's Past and Present and Ruskin's Unto This Last shattered existing notions about the social system. Carlyle indicted the competitive, individualist ethic inherent in capitalism whilst Ruskin assaulted industrialisation as destructive of human dignity and freedom, leading to the degradation of the operative into a mere machine, an argument analogous to the Marxist theory of alienation. Yet both men looked to the past for their ideal, to a quasi-feudal age and authoritarian forms of government. Socialists repudiated these aspects of Carlyle and Ruskin,⁴ but their moral and social teachings, their critique of capitalism, permeated the movement.

The work of John Stuart Mill provided a third important foundation for the Socialist revival. Sir Ernest Barker has said that Mill served 'in the years between 1848 and 1880, as the bridge from laissez-faire to the idea of social readjustment by the State, and from political Radicalism to economic Socialism.'⁵ Mill's moral teachings prepared many Radicals to view Socialism more favourably- in an almost Owenite sense he hoped for the perfectibility of mankind by means of systematic moral education, inspired by a moral and intellectual elite at the head of society. His economic theories were never very favourable to Socialistic schemes; a concern for individual liberty made him sceptical of practical plans for social reconstruction, seeing in them possible authoritarian tendencies. Here too he influenced many early converts to Socialism. Tom Mann learned by heart one

passage from Mill's autobiography:

The Social Problem of the future we considered to be, how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labour.⁶

1

The gulf between the norms of an industrial and urban society and the aesthetic impulse of many in the mid-Victorian era, which led to Pierson's 'divided self', was best expressed through these three dominant modes of thought, the Christian, the romantic and the utilitarian. Some experimented with more exotic solutions, as exemplified by cults such as the Swedenborgians. Many early Socialist recruits had tested a number of strategies and philosophies. They had emerged from a chaotic cultural milieu. Mere theorising however would not have led to Socialism, particularly as those suffering this alienation and attempting to find solutions were largely of the middle class or provincial lower middle class. Attempts to translate theory into practice allowed these traditions to adopt more popular forms and enter a wider arena.

Until the end of the eighteenth century working-class protest was usually expressed in traditional Christian terminology. The French Revolution and the writings of Thomas Paine led to a new and secular radicalism, as expressed by the Corresponding Societies and the various Jacobin Clubs, coupled with Robert Owen's doctrine of natural harmony. Owen's utopian strategies

caused the collapse of his model communities but the main impulses of the movement continued in other forms. The co-operative movement attempted economic security, spiritualism satisfied the millennial bent and Owen's educational mission was reformulated by Holyoake as Secularism, a morality based on material and social facts. At its peak Secularism had some 100 branches with 7,000 members but its greatest influence did not stem from its crusade against religion. As Edward Royle has pointed out, it was also 'a political movement which was a part of the mainstream of the British Liberal tradition.'⁷ Most Secularists were Radicals to some degree and the freethought leaders, Bradlaugh in particular, gained more support with their popular Radical politics than with their attacks on religion. Willard Wolfe has noted that the chief Radical strongholds of Victorian England were to become labour strongholds of the twentieth century and more importantly that Socialism as it eventually evolved in Britain was 'old Radicalism writ large', a new way of stating old ideas and feelings.

British Radicalism lacked a distinctive social theory of its own and was a very diverse movement, embracing the extreme left wing of the Chartist movement and the Liberal, individualist philosophy of the middle class. It was essentially a vast, incoherent protest movement against social privilege and the landed aristocracy, originating in the Wilkite agitation of the 1760s for the reform of Parliament. Indeed parliamentary reform was its panacea for social distress and its political platform. As the nineteenth century progressed the left wing of Radicalism

as represented by Chartism, was superseded by the classical liberal theories, albeit applied to all men. The Movement was against the establishment, pro-free trade, for an end to foreign wars, and it became increasingly identified with nonconformity in religion. Whilst the leadership was middle class it embraced too the 'aristocracy of labour', who epitomised the same moral code and saw the aristocracy as parasites worth any struggle to be rid of.

1

Socialists, of course, extended their animus to all forms of exploitation, social power and status not based on strict moral desert. Their insistence on a workman's right to the 'whole produce of his labour' owed an obvious debt to Liberal individualism, with surplus value being an extension of that theory. The capitalist rentiers replaced the landed aristocracy as the chief object of hostility, but both Socialists and Radicals shared a hatred of the leisured classes. The major differentiation between the two lay in the Socialist emphasis on the collective, in their conception of an organic society, and here they had a much closer affinity to the romantic-conservative theories of Carlyle and Ruskin. Radicalism pointed to the shibboleths to be knocked down but failed to provide any alternative, and in that sense proved a powerful yet negative inspiration for the Socialist Movement. Its political campaigns of the 1860s and 1870s were training grounds for future converts to Socialism.

The major concerns of British Radicals were parliamentary reform, Republicanism - albeit short-lived - Ireland, the Eastern Question and, above all, land reform. Parliamentary reform

can be taken for granted as a cause common to all radicals, although the usual cry for manhood suffrage would be extended by the Socialists to universal suffrage. Republicanism impinged very briefly on the political scene. Continuing the tradition of Paine, Shelly and Carlile, it re-emerged in response to the economic depression of the late 1860s and the absence from public life of Queen Victoria at that time. The International Republican Association was formed in 1869 and a periodical, The Republican, appeared in September 1870. Yet from the beginning there were divisions between the moderate, respectable Republicanism exemplified by Bradlaugh and the more extreme groups such as the Universal Republican League, the O'Brienites and the IWMA. Bradlaugh argued that in England it would be possible to work within the law and he could not stomach the IWMA's support for the Paris Commune. Respectable Republicanism collapsed in the wave of sympathy for the Prince of Wales, who caught typhoid in 1872, leaving a myriad of small, sectarian groups competing for support. The overwhelming support for the 1887 jubilee demonstrate its marginality but, nonetheless, the arguments, particularly in the London political clubs, provided one further support for 'the foundations of power'.

The Eastern Question aroused strong feelings amongst Radicals and more importantly attracted others such as William Morris, previously politically inactive. Gladstone had attacked the 'Bulgarian Horrors' but the next Liberal Government, of 1880, was soon to be involved in wars in Egypt and the Sudan. This too stimulated some Radicals to seek alternatives to parliamentary

reform, and H. H. Champion was one who came to the Social-Democratic Federation as a result of Liberal Imperialism.

Ireland was central to British politics from the 1870s onwards, because of its acute agricultural crisis, the disciplined body of Westminster Irish M.Ps, and the fact that a considerable number of absentee landlords formed an important section of the Tory Party. There was a traditional sympathy between Irish revolutionaries and politically conscious English workers. Jack Williams and George Lansbury were but two to graduate to Socialism via Radical campaigns for Irish freedom, whilst legislative independence for Ireland would form part of the Democratic Federation programme. Ireland was also intimately connected with the question of land reform and this, more than any other issue, paved the way for Socialism. 'For most future Socialists, land reform was a half-way house on their march from radicalism.'⁸

The land reformers were a very diverse body, ranging from the relative moderation of J. S. Mill's Land Tenure Reform Association to the land nationalisation of the Land and Labour League. Ricardo's theory of rent underpinned their arguments and their basic principle was that 'no man made the land; it is the original inheritance of the whole species.'⁹ The Radicals detestation of landowners stemmed from the view that theirs was 'a kind of income which constantly tends to increase, without any exertion or sacrifice on the part of the owners.'¹⁰ No principle of private property would therefore be violated if the State appropriated at least part of that increase in wealth for the

benefit of the population as a whole. Mill was motivated in his schemes for land reform by his belief in the possibility of a social revolution which could only be forestalled by serious social reform, a position very similar to that of Hyndman in 1881. His Land Tenure Reform Association, founded in 1870, opened up the political debate and a Land Law Reform League was formed in 1880 with Bradlaugh as President; these prepared the way for Henry George's campaign in the early 1880's. d

The debate about land reform was probably the only force capable of creating a mass audience for Socialism in the early 1880s. It was intimately connected with Ireland and the problem of absenteeism and rack-renting whilst the monopoly of English land and political power by a small group of landowners made it especially vulnerable to Radical attack. A long-standing Radical tradition held that the land was capable of supporting all and that the masses of urban unemployed were in effect, labourers turned off the land by grasping landlords. Thus George's Progress and Poverty, published in Britain in January 1881, contained nothing new for English readers- it combined the ideas of natural rights, Ricardo's and Mill's theories of rent, and the schemes of Thomas Spence and Patrick Dove. Yet the book sold a spectacular 100,000 copies in a year, the key to its success lying in its popular, eloquent style and its simple panacea for distress, the 'single tax' on rent. More importantly his arguments broke the spell of laissez-faire, introducing many for the first time to serious criticism of the economic system and leading some on to anti-capitalist ideas and thus Socialism. Tom Mann later recalled that George was 'the real stimulus

that helped me to a prolonged and continuous study of social economics',¹¹ whilst Max Beer estimated that 'Four-fifths of the socialist leaders of Great Britain in the 'eighties had passed through the school of Henry George'.¹² Furthermore George provided analogies of several key Marxian doctrines such as the increasing misery of the proletariat and the contradictions inherent in capitalism, whilst his law of rent was the moral and economic equivalent of Marx's law of surplus value. Both systems of thought argued that industrial society led to working-class alienation. As George argued in Progress and Poverty, a man

Producing goods in which he has no share, working with tools he cannot hope to own.... compelled to ever closer more continuous labour than the savage.... loses the essential quality of manhood.... He becomes a slave, a machine, a commodity.¹³

It is doubtful if George had read Marx but only William Morris of the English Marxists would show a similar awareness of alienation.

The 1870s and early 1880s therefore produced 'a growing ferment of social criticism and radical democratic ideas which gave rise to the revival of socialist thought....'¹⁴ It would be a logical progression, for example, from the idea of 'unearned increment' to surplus value, to the idea that capital as well as land was a monopoly. There were a number of 'straws in the wind' pointing to a Socialist revival. The Guild of St. Matthew,

formed in 1877, was an attempt to develop a Christian Socialist Movement; William Harrison Riley, an old member of the IWMA, studied Marx and issued a monthly, The Socialist, in Sheffield. Ernest Belfort Bax, a journalist, wrote articles on Marxism in Modern Thought in 1879. Early in that year John Sketchley formed a Midland Social Democratic Association in Birmingham with a programme including abolition of the monarchy, the Lords and the State Church. It corresponded with people all over the country, one correspondent in Chesterfield urging a national organisation of trades for protection 'against the tyranny of capital, with a view to the ultimate suppression of the capitalist class' and another from Guildford suggesting 'the organisation of the whole southern counties on a Social-Democratic basis.'¹⁵ Even Joseph Chamberlain's programme differed from that of the Democratic Federation only in terms of land nationalisation. More important, however, was the political culture developed in the London clubs of the 1870s. Stan Shipley has vividly recreated this milieu, 'which produced an atmosphere in which an avowedly Socialist movement could emerge.'¹⁶ Here old Chartists mingled with younger radicals and continental refugees to form 'a highly self-conscious political cadre,' many of whose members held influential positions in the London trade societies.

The major impetus for Socialist ideas came from the Stratford Dialectical and Radical Club and the Labour Emancipation League in East London, and from the Rose Street Club, the Manhood Suffrage League and the Marylebone Central Democratic Association in the West. The Rose Street Club traced

its origins back to the formation of the Communistische Arbeiter Bildungs Verein in 1840 and was the headquarters of the continental Socialist refugees. After the collapse of the First International the club was 'the spot where the light was kept burning,'¹⁷ though there were few English members. Of far greater importance for English Socialism was the Manhood Suffrage League, one of the most advanced and influential of the metropolitan clubs, founded in the mid-1870s by survivors of the O'Brienite Movement, some of whom would later become leading agents in the formation of the Social-Democratic Federation. Marx had said when comparing them to the British trade unionists in the IWMA, that they were 'more revolutionary, firmer on the land question, less nationalistic, and not susceptible to bourgeois bribery in one form or another.'¹⁸ From Bronterre O'Brien these men developed a class conflict analysis of society long before they read Marx; he taught them the need to use political means to achieve social ends, to combine trade-union activities and political agitation. His demands for universal suffrage, for nationalisation of the land and mines, the transport system, gas and water supplies, were propagandised by his supporters long before they were taken up by the SDF. Indeed one section, the International Democratic Association, refused to affiliate to the First International because 'they had not believed it went far enough.'¹⁹

The Soho O'Brienites were a very small group of revolutionaries but, as Stan Shipley has argued, their beliefs did not set them apart from their fellow artisans. The chief

concern of the Murrays, Townshend and others was to use learning as a weapon in the class struggle, and the MSL provided them with a stage from which to air their views. The club's programme for the second half of 1881 shows that Socialism had become a live issue; Adam Weiler, an old ally of Marx, lectured on "The Communist Manifesto",²⁰ James Benny on "Socialism, Communism and the Organisation of Labour"²¹, T. Raleigh on "German Socialism"²², Edwin Dunn on "Who are the Revolutionists and What are their aims?"²³, Mr. Sheppard on "Socialism"²⁴, and at the end of the year Hyndman discussed "Progress and Poverty".²⁵ Members of the League became particularly influential in the Marylebone Central Democratic Association, which in 1881 adopted a programme more advanced than that of the Democratic Federation, and practically took over the Reverend Henry Solly's Social and Political Education League. This provided a platform for Socialist agitators and later functioned as a "front" organisation for the SDF. Well might Shipley argue that the spadework for the SDF was done by the Manhood Suffrage League, which later provided three members of the SDF executive, James Murray, R. D. Butler and James MacDonald.

A phenomenon of the late 1870s and early 1880s in London was the transition of many from Secularism to Socialism, the result of impatience with established methods of Secularist activity and anger at the movement's reluctance to commit itself to a definite political creed. The key point, as Edward Royle has noted, was that 'The debate....took place not between Secularist and Socialist societies, but within Secularism itself,

before there were many socialist societies in existence.'²⁶

Thomas Okey, a Spitalfields basket weaver and member of the Hall of Science, later recalled that

....during the 'seventies and 'eighties of last century, indications were obvious both on the platform and in the audience of the Hall of Science that the Marxian bible, or rather the earlier communist manifesto (1848) of Marx and Engels....had begun to leaven English democratic thought.²⁷

This phenomenon is well illustrated by the development of the Stratford Dialectical and Radical Club out of the Stratford branch of the NSS in 1880.

In January 1878 this branch attempted to form the nucleus of a new Radical Party; it was listening to a lecture on Socialism as early as July of that year and finally split from the NSS in 1880 because, said one member, of the 'urgent necessity of advocating "this worldism" (social questions) rather than continuing our anti-theological propaganda.'²⁸ There was also some disquiet at the parliamentary performance of Bradlaugh after his election at Northampton in 1880. The club met at the Telegraph in Leyton Road, Stratford, where the landlord was Captain Tom Lemon, later to be on the executive of the Democratic Federation. Its defence of Johann Most, editor of Freiheit²⁹, its opposition to coercion in Ireland even after the Phoenix Park murders of 1882, and its role in the formation of the Democratic Federation, all demonstrated the club's advanced political position. From its open-air meetings on Mile End

Waste in 1881 emerged the Labour Emancipation League, 'the first Socialist organisation in London with any influence'.³⁰ The League provided a common organisation for many of the individuals already active in London and acted as a halfway house, in which the theories of the old guard and of the new pioneers both found expression. Much of its programme was a repetition of old Chartist and Radical demands but the final two clauses were a bridge to modern Socialism. 'As Labour is the foundation of all wealth', began clause eight, so must that wealth 'be equitably shared by All', whilst clause nine called for the nationalisation of the 'Instruments of Production and the Means of Employment'. Spurred on by its indefatigable secretary Joseph Lane the League formed a number of branches in London's East End, and its agitation attracted attention from another newly-formed organisation, the Democratic Federation. However, the LEL was a predominantly working-class organisation and at that time its programme was more advanced than that of Hyndman's body. Significantly, when the Radical clubs split from the Democratic Federation in 1883, LEL members ensured that 'almost alone....the Stratford Radical Club stuck to the growing advanced movement.'³¹

These developments explain London's primacy in the early years of the SDF's history. Elsewhere isolated individuals such as Sketchley in Birmingham, Riley and Jonathan Taylor in Sheffield, Thomas Barclay in Leicester, were groping their way towards a Socialist analysis of society, but in the London of the 1870s a small but influential group of workers, holding

strategic positions in the clubs and trade societies, played a key role in the transition from Radicalism to Socialism. Long before Marx's work was widely available, long before the publication of Progress and Poverty, the Murrays, Townshend, Frank Kitz and others were formed in their Socialist opinions. Their role has been largely unnoticed because, as Shipley comments, historians like the Webbs 'overestimate the importance of the printed word as against the spoken',³² yet their discussions of the theories of Bronterre O'Brien, of Robert Owen, of Marx and others 'produced an atmosphere in which an avowedly Socialist movement could emerge.'³³

The General Election of 1880 demonstrated the emphatic hold of the Liberal Party over the working-class vote. Only three working men were elected to Parliament, all as Liberals, and the death of Alexander McDonald the following year reduced Labour strength at Westminster to two M.Ps, Henry Broadhurst and Thomas Burt. Gladstone's personality and the trade depression combined to give the Liberals a clear majority of seventy-two seats in Parliament, and Radical expectations were high in view of Gladstone's promises during the Midlothian campaign. Disillusionment soon set in. The economic slump, which had begun in 1875, showed no signs of alleviating. Its effects were felt especially in London with the decline of the shipbuilding industry and increasing pressures on the small-scale industry so important as a source of employment. However, it was not social reform but the Gladstone government's policy of coercion in

Ireland which spurred the Radicals into action.

Late in 1880 F. W. Soutter founded a weekly paper, the Radical, to support the Anti-Coercion Association. The paper combined its Irish agitation with strong demands for increased labour representation in Parliament. Many Radicals found little to choose between Whigs and Tories and they increasingly despaired of the Liberal Government. 'This Government', wrote one, 'during its twelve months tenure of office has done more to render the cause of Liberalism ridiculous and obnoxious, hateful and contemptible, than any one of its predecessors during the last century.'³⁴ Disillusioned Radicalism suggested to some the basis for a new organisation, to none more so than Henry Mayers Hyndman.

Hyndman's career has been well documented by Chushichi Tsuzuki. Born on the 7 March 1842, the son of a wealthy London merchant, he was a most improbable Socialist. Privately tutored, Hyndman then went to Cambridge where classical political economy, utilitarianism and positivism provided him with the intellectual background from which he later advanced to Socialism. His contact with the Italian Risorgimento, as a war correspondent for the Pall Mall Gazette, was an early influence which he later described as 'the turning point of his life.'³⁵ In 1868 he assisted Boyd Kinnear in the Fife shire by-election, an experience which gave him 'an abiding contempt for our....pseudo-democracy.'³⁶ Similarly influential was a visit to Australia

in 1869 where he 'first began to grasp in earnest....communal theories' because he 'never could endure the idea that the land of a country should belong to a mere handful of people whose forbears had obtained it either by force or fraud....',³⁷

Hyndman developed a deep concern for India in the 1870s and in October 1878 published an article on 'The Bankruptcy of India' in the Nineteenth Century. This interest led him to champion the idea of a liberal empire, a close union of 'democratic colonies', which he would later translate into a 'Socialist commonwealth' led by Britain and setting an example to the rest of the world. The article brought Hyndman a wider audience, which was widened still further when the debate over the Eastern Question brought him into contact with Socialist refugees in London; through one, Karl Hirsch, he met Marx early in 1880. In March of that year Hyndman decided to stand in the general election as an independent candidate for Marylebone.

At this time Hyndman was very much the archetypal middle-class reformer, a sympathiser with Randolph Churchill and his Tory Democracy and indeed out of step with much of Radical opinion. He opposed Gladstone's pro-Russian policy, was against Home Rule for Ireland and the Disestablishment of the Church of England and went no further than 'An extension of household suffrage to the counties' and 'a large redistribution of seats'. Furthermore he was proud of England's empire and supported an enlarged navy to protect her food supplies. 'In short,' said Hyndman to the Marylebone electors 'I am earnestly bent upon reform at home and resolute to maintain the power and dignity

of England abroad.'³⁸ There were few signs here of a future 'revolutionary' Socialist and indeed Gladstone, an elector in the constituency, denounced him as a Tory. Hyndman was still essentially Conservative; he had high hopes of Disraeli as an agent of social reform and would always retain a fear of 'the empty-headed fools of democracy who imagine, or pretend, that because men should be socially equal therefore leadership and initiative and in a sense authority become unnecessary.'³⁹ Small wonder then that when he approached Joseph Lane in a search for working-class support Lane told him that he was wasting his time.

Land nationalisation he thought too extreme; was opposed to Home Rule, on the suffrage question he made a remark I have never forgotten or forgiven. He asked me if I meant to say that a loafer in the East End of London was to be placed on an equality with myself. No, the very farthest he would go was that every man who could read and write should have a vote....⁴⁰

Only one meeting was held in support of Hyndman's candidature and he withdrew from the contest. Labelled 'jingo' by the Radicals for his anti-Russian views, there seemed little hope of Hyndman forming a new party on the left. Yet this episode was the prelude 'to a political career which increasingly absorbed his energies and his wealth.'⁴¹ Hyndman's inadequacy at Marylebone led him to seek new ideas. He met Rudolf Meyer,

a German agrarian Socialist, and studied Chartism. He developed an interest in the work of Lassalle, whom he saw essentially as a national socialist aiming to raise his country to greatness and glory via Socialism. In many ways Hyndman was to assign himself the role of a British Lassalle, combining his Socialism with patriotic aspirations. Moreover, after the 1880s both Hyndman and the SDF adopted the Lassallean road to Socialism via the ballot box.

By mid-1880 then,

as a result of my studies on India, my conviction as to the hopelessness of Liberalism and Radicalism, my reading up of the Chartist movement, and my acquaintance with foreign revolutionists, I had come very near to being an avowed Socialist.⁴²

Hyndman's hatred of capitalism, however, was still largely sentimental and 'Nothing beyond mitigating its abominations seemed possible.'⁴³ This attitude was changed when he read the French edition of Capital whilst he was en route to America. Cheerfully admitting that he did not fully grasp the significance of all Marx's theories, Hyndman was nonetheless convinced by Marx's analysis of the inevitability of the transition from capitalism to Socialism. This seemed to provide him with a sound basis for his hitherto incoherent ideas. Also, Hyndman's visit to America had led him to realise that democratic institutions were no guarantee of economic progress, whilst the support

of the American Irish for Home Rule seemed to portend troubles to come. On his return to England he began to visit Marx on a regular basis. Marx's 'genius, his vast erudition and his masterly survey of human life'⁴⁴ had made a vast impression on Hyndman, but Marx for his part was rather doubtful about Hyndman and his plans for a peaceful revolution brought about 'by a thoroughly educated industrial democracy.'⁴⁵ This distrust deepened in January 1881 with the publication of Hyndman's article 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch' in the influential monthly The Nineteenth Century. Drawing upon conversations with Marx about the Continental revolutionary movement Hyndman had used the information in a distinctly anti-revolutionary sense. 'From that time onwards,' says Max Beer, 'Marx looked with suspicion upon Hyndman, and regarded him as a news-hunting busybody.'⁴⁶

Readers of the article must have been somewhat incredulous of the picture painted by Hyndman. 'Never, perhaps,' he said, 'has the certainty of approaching trouble, social and political, been more manifest than it is today. The issues are more complicated than ever before, and that they can be settled without grave disturbance is scarcely credible.'⁴⁷ Such a scenario seemed hardly relevant to an England bathed in social harmony, yet the depression which had begun in 1875 had greatly worsened the distress of the urban poor. Hyndman aimed to jolt his readers out of their sense of complacency and warn them of the dangers to come if action was not taken. Still a Tory Radical by inclination he viewed with alarm the revolutionary movements

on the Continent, motivated by a programme which 'to most of us Englishmen seems a very midsummer madness.'⁴⁸ Their methods were not appropriate to an England which had 'long had nearly all that the people of the Continent of Europe are still striving for.'⁴⁹ The state management of postal and telegraph services and the increasing control locally of gas and water supplies were seen by Hyndman as signposts to Socialism; incredibly he saw even the Poor Law as 'distinctly communistic'. In his view the ruling class could stave off revolution by making concessions; if they would only be aware of 'the graver features in our home life', the resentment over the rights connected with property, the conditions in London and the Northern towns, and the Irish question then, thought Hyndman, 'we shall be able to satisfy the legitimate claims of the many without trenching upon the rights or the privileges of the few.'⁵⁰ His patriotic sentiments to the fore, Hyndman could then envisage England leading the way 'as she did with democracy, to social reorganisation.'⁵¹

The views contained in this article were well calculated to appeal to Radical sentiments; they were the ideas of Radical collectivism, to be pursued by constitutional means under enlightened leadership. Such arguments were not new, nor were they intended to be so. Hyndman was aiming at the audience contained within the London Radical Clubs, hoping to permeate them with Socialist ideas. Where he parted company with Radicalism was in his emphasis upon economic action by the State, but otherwise his arguments in favour of collectivism were based

on the moral values of Radicalism. Capitalism was immoral, a system of 'monopoly' built on special privilege. Viewed retrospectively his arguments were almost Fabian:- the gradual extension of state power at the expense of capitalism. In fact Hyndman's position at that time was midway between the new Radicalism of the 1870s and the later Radical Socialism of the Fabians and the ILP. Within months of the publication of the 'Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch' the Democratic Federation was formed.

'Towards the close of 1880 and the beginning of 1881', said Hyndman,

there was a growing feeling that an effort should be made to rally together into a party the really advanced men and women who were in revolt against the obvious betrayal of all democratic principles at home and abroad by Mr Gladstone's Government.⁵²

A visit to Disraeli had convinced him that reform via the Tory party was not possible and in the spring of 1881 he took the initiative. The founding meetings of the Democratic Federation have been well detailed by Mira Wilkins,⁵³ but certain points are worthy of emphasis. The first two meetings, at the Rose Street Club, Soho, and the Westminster Palace Hotel, brought together a considerable cross-section of Radical opinion which favoured the formation of a new organisation, but on the basis of a very limited programme: direct representation of Labour, manhood suffrage and payment of M.Ps. were agreed upon. Joseph

Cowen, the Radical Member for Newcastle, seemed a popular choice to head any such organisation. Before the third meeting however Hyndman had asserted himself and friction resulted which threatened to wreck the new party before it got off the ground. Cowen did not attend this meeting although it is untrue to say, as some have suggested, that he thereby dissociated himself from the Federation.⁵⁴ More significantly the Radical press ignored the gathering. In fairness to Hyndman it should be noted that many radicals were hostile simply because of his relative newness to the movement. Even Jack Williams, a most loyal supporter of Hyndman in later years, recalled that 'most of us there were a bit suspicious of him as a middle-class man at first.'⁵⁵ Clearly Hyndman's egoism had alienated many potential supporters. Undoubtedly his 'ultra-jingo' reputation deterred many more. These were portents for the future. Nonetheless Hyndman was a man of ability with a forceful personality and sufficient support remained for a founding conference to be held on 8 June at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, where less than two decades later the Labour Representation Committee was founded.

They met, said Hyndman, 'to consider why, at an unprecedented period in the history of the country, there was so little harmony between the various Radical bodies.'⁵⁶ That soon became apparent, for many present obviously represented only sectional interests. There was disagreement over the suffrage, with Hyndman favouring manhood suffrage but adult suffrage, backed by Herbert Burrows and Helen Taylor, winning the day. That

Hyndman stood to the right of many delegates was further demonstrated by his reaction to a proposal calling for the abolition of the monarchy. He threatened to vacate the chair rather than assent to such disloyalty. Such views so dismayed J. Morrison Davidson and Andreas Scheu that they left the hall, whilst the Radical regarded the incident as further evidence of middle-class leadership and the corrupting element of patronage.⁵⁷ Yet there was great enthusiasm for land nationalisation and on the question of Irish legislative independence there was complete unanimity. This was proposed by a Nottingham delegate, seconded by J. J. Winks, later secretary of the DF and supported by the Irish M.P., Justin McCarthy. Upon its acceptance the Reverend Harold Rylett, an executive member of the Land League, invited two delegates to visit Ireland as guests of that body. These events anticipated the orientation of much of the Democratic Federation's early work.

There was no mention of Socialism; the Federation's programme was Radical, with the exception of land nationalisation all its clauses being political rather than social. Indeed Hyndman had neither the power nor the desire to move the Federation towards Socialism. As already noted his views were distinctly to the right of many. At the meeting he had distributed to delegates copies of his book, England for All, which further emphasises this point. In some respects indeed its arguments fell short even of the agreed programme, advocating land reform rather than nationalisation, reform rather than abolition of the House of Lords, and failing to mention

legislative independence for Ireland. In the book Hyndman continued to place his faith in the 'truer patriotism of the upper class' which would enable England to demonstrate to the rest of the world that it was possible to have a peaceful revolution. What that revolution entailed was unclear, for Hyndman advocated social reform and state control of the railways, mines and factories, whilst writing of 'the demon of Socialism.'⁵⁸ England for All was, as Tsuzuki has commented, a textbook of English 'Tory Democracy' rather than Continental Social Democracy. Yet it contained two chapters on labour and capital which attempted to summarize Marx.

It is well known that Marx was annoyed at what he regarded as a plagiarism by Hyndman. The real cause of his annoyance, however, was the fact that Hyndman had attempted to harness Marx's theories to an immediate policy of his own. A summary of Capital, he thought, was out of place in the programme of a party which was not a distinct, independent, working-class party. More importantly Marx's distaste was shared to a much greater degree by Engels. Hyndman and Engels never met but their hostility would significantly affect the development of the Movement. At this time Engels had grounds for believing that other avenues were open for the advance of British Socialism. He had been invited to write a series of articles in the Labour Standard, organ of the London Trades Council, in which he emphasised the need for a political workers' party in England. These articles had a significant effect upon a number of young

and active trades unionists such as James MacDonald, later secretary of the London Trades Council.⁵⁹ A 'Democratic League of Great Britain and Ireland' was formed in Manchester in April and a group of 'Social-Democrats' meeting at Hamilton in June had resolved to form a Scottish Labour Party with a programme including the nationalisation of industry. Engels regarded these developments as far more promising than the 'centre of organisation' which was the declared objective of Hyndman's Democratic Federation. Yet within a year 'Hyndman was a complete and thorough-going revolutionary socialist',⁶⁰ and he had taken the Federation with him.

His transformation can be traced through the history of England for All. In September 1881 two new editions appeared, one a cheap edition aimed at reaching a mass market. It had been modified to conform with decisions reached at the Democratic Federation's founding conference and, significantly, the phrase 'demon of Socialism' was omitted. His Marxism was not a coherent doctrine and the deficiencies demonstrated in England for All would persist into the theory of the SDF. The book lacked a conceptual framework, failed to define terms and did not provide a reasoned argument either morally or historically. There was a conflict, for example, between the Marxist view of class and Hyndman's picture of 'the nation' as providing some sort of consensus. Similarly he argued at times the orthodox Marxist viewpoint of the State as a class instrument, yet elsewhere saw it acting in the interests of the nation as a whole. Hyndman's summary of Marx concentrated solely on

economics, ignoring Marx's sociology, history and the dialectic. Even the economics were somewhat simplistic, positing the iron law of wages which Marx had already rejected and presenting a theory of surplus value which he could have obtained from the early English Socialists. The overwhelming impression is of an attack on capitalism couched in moral terms and in this sense, as Marx himself agreed, the book made good propaganda. England For All introduced many later Socialists to Marx. Thus Edward Carpenter recalled that 'The instant I read that chapter in "England for All" - the mass of floating impressions, sentiments, ideals etc. in my mind fell into shape - and I had a clear line of social reconstruction before me.'⁶¹

Hyndman had formed his 'centre of organisation', a nucleus consisting largely of middle-class intellectuals. His own ideas had crystallised from an incoherent hatred of capitalism into a somewhat idiosyncratic but definite revolutionary Socialism. He had now to introduce his message to a wider audience and persuade others to accept his scheme of social reconstruction.

NOTES

1. George Harris, William Townshend and Charles Murray.
2. S. Pierson, Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism, (1973).
3. H. W. Nevinson, Changes and Chances, (1923), p.121, quoted in S. Yeo, 'A New Life', op cit, p.10.
4. It is worth noting that the initial response to contemporary industrial society of a number of Socialists, pre-eminently William Morris, was to turn their backs on it, to look back to a 'golden age' in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
5. Quoted in W. Wolfe, From Radicalism to Socialism, (1975), p.19.
6. Quoted in D. Torr, op cit, p.80.
7. E. Royle, Radicals, Secularists and Republicans, (1980), p.192
8. A. L. Morton and G. Tate, The British Labour Movement, (1978), p.161.
9. J. S. Mill, Principles of Political Economy, quoted in M. Beer, History of British Socialism, Vol.II, (1929), p.238.
10. Ibid.
11. T. Mann, From Single Tax to Syndicalism, (1913).
12. M. Beer, op cit, p.234.
13. H. George, Progress and Poverty, (1883), p.250.
14. Morton and Tate, op cit, p.161.
15. Reynolds' Newspaper, 5 and 26 January 1879.
16. S. Shipley, Club Life and Socialism in Mid-Victorian London, (1971), p.71.

17. H. W. Lee and E. Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, (1935), p.42.
18. Marx to Friedrich Bolte, quoted in Shipley, op.cit., p.6.
19. Documents of the First International, VOL.IV, pp.172-2 quoted in Shipley, op.cit., p.17.
20. Reynolds' Newspaper, 7 August and 25 September 1881.
21. Ibid., 8 May 1881.
22. Ibid., 22 May, 1881.
23. Ibid., 21 August 1881.
24. Ibid., 28 August 1881.
25. Ibid., 27 November 1881.
26. E. Royle, op.cit., p.232.
27. Thomas Okey, A Basketful of Memories, (1930), quoted in Shipley, op.cit., p.40.
28. Ambrose Barker, 'Reminiscences of a Revolutionist', unpublished manuscript, quoted in Shipley, op.cit., p.40.
29. Most had written articles supporting the assassination of Tsar Alexander II. Jack Williams, later an SDF member and faithful supporter of Hyndman, sold Freiheit outside the court during Most's trial.
30. E. P. Thompson, op.cit., p.285.
31. Lee and Archold, op.cit., p.50.
32. Shipley, op.cit., p.71.
33. Ibid.
34. Reynolds' Newspaper, 6 March 1881.
35. H. M. Hyndman, The Record of an Adventurous Life, (1911), p.1
36. Ibid., pp.96-7.
37. Ibid., p.102.

38. The Marylebone Mercury, 13 March 1880, quoted in Lee and Archold, op.cit., pp.275-76.
39. H. M. Hyndman, The Record of an Adventurous Life, p.21.
40. Lee and Archold, op.cit., p.43.
41. C. Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, (1961), p.30
42. Hyndman, The Record, p.206.
43. Ibid., p.207.
44. Ibid., p.273.
45. Ibid., p.210.
46. Beer, op.cit., p.229.
47. H. M. Hyndman, 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch' in The Nineteenth Century, No. LXVII, January 1881, p.1.
48. Ibid., p.11.
49. Ibid., pp.11-12.
50. Ibid., p.12.
51. Ibid.
52. Hyndman, The Record, p.223.
53. M. Wilkins, 'The Non-Socialist Origins of England's First Important Socialist Organisation', International Review of Social History, (1959), pp.199-207.
54. Cowen chaired a meeting to protest against Irish coercion in June 1882, helped Hyndman with the printing of Justice and even paid Hyndman's bail in February 1886.
55. Justice, 21 July 1894.
56. Reynolds' Newspaper, 12 June 1881.
57. The Radical, 11 June 1881.
58. H. M. Hyndman, England for All, (1973 edition), p.86.
59. See J. MacDonald, 'How I became a Socialist' in E. J.

Hobsbawm, Labour's Turning Point, (1974), p.33.

60. Wilkins, op.cit., p.207.

61. E. Carpenter, My Days and Dreams, (1921 edition) p.114.

CHAPTER II

FROM RADICALISM TO SOCIALISM: 'A COLLECTION OF ODDITIES'.

In its early years the Democratic Foundation's activities were dominated by the Irish question, an orientation which was undoubtedly responsible for bringing the Federation to public notice. However, its attacks on the Government and its allegation that coercion in Ireland was merely a precursor of coercion at home alienated many of its early supporters. Indeed much of the Federation's Radical support melted away in September 1881 when it supported a Land League candidate against the Liberal nominee in the Tyrone by-election. Only the Stratford Radical Club remained loyal, the others believing that the Federation had acted in the Tory interest. Hyndman was once more denounced as 'a Tory in disguise'.¹ The Radical exodus left a very small organisation indeed. One Conservative journal wrote jokingly of 'The Democratic Federation, as Mr. Hyndman will persist in calling himself',² and Kropotkin later remembered of a Socialist gathering in the autumn of 1881 that 'Mrs Hyndman had received all the Congress in her house'.³ Engels could, very reasonably, dismiss the Federation as 'of no account whatever'.⁴

Could the DF build support on the basis of hostility to the Liberal Government? This was a major problem, one which was to dog it throughout the 1880s. In directing its attack against the Liberal Party the Federation risked alienating those Radicals upon whose support it was counting. Yet to

concentrate its fire upon the Tory Party would also have proved counter-productive. As the Liberal Party was the working man's party and de facto the anti-Tory party there would then have been no good reason for Radicals to move to the Federation. Therefore the Federation's attack on the Liberal Party as simply another capitalist party and, moreover, one duping the workers into acceptance of the status quo had to be communicated more effectively. Thus the propaganda continued and fresh efforts were made to improve the organisation. In addition to debates within the Radical clubs⁵ 'it now also became necessary to reach the people by open-air meetings at the corners of the street',⁶ a method of agitation to be increasingly utilised in the coming years. The Federation's first open-air meeting, to defend the Irish Land League, was held in Hyde Park on 23 October 1881. Other activities included participation in the Freiheit defence committee, a public meeting to argue for the abolition of the House of Lords, and a meeting after the Trades Union Congress where, 'for about the first time since the Chartist Movement, the right of the people to the collective ownership of the soil' was proclaimed.⁷ Organisationally advances were made with the affiliation of the Manchester group, 'The Democratic League of Great Britain and Ireland', and the establishment of six provincial groups by the time of the first Annual Conference.

The Federation's programme was essentially political but Hyndman was now busily working to spread Socialist ideas. Thus the meetings and addresses given by members were often of

a wider character than the programme would suggest. J. F. Murray, for example, lectured to Battersea Liberal Club on 21 August, 1881, on 'The Principles of Social-Democracy', Hyndman to the Poplar Land League on 4 December on 'The Tyranny of Capital in England and America', and Frank Kitz on 8 January, 1882, to the Federation's Number One branch on 'Aims of the Socialists'. Such efforts though were still secondary to the Irish propaganda, which received a major setback with the Phoenix Park murders on 6 May 1882. H. W. Lee later remembered the difficulties of campaigning for Irish Freedom at a time when 'nothing was too bad to be said of and done to the Irish Land Leaguers'.⁸ But, nothing daunted, the Federation reacted immediately when the Government introduced a new Coercion Bill. Calling a demonstration in Hyde Park for Sunday 11 June, their handbills accused the Government of establishing 'a despotism worse than anything known in these islands since the days of the infamous Star Chamber'.⁹ In spite of heavy rain a crowd estimated at anything between 30,000 and 80,000 gathered to hear speakers denounce coercion in Ireland. Such crowds proved the DF correct in its assumption that the Irish issue would provide it with a ready-made audience, but both then and in the future the single-issue campaign failed to produce a significant number of recruits. Hyndman alienated the most likely by his vehement attacks on political Radicalism and by his insistence that the Liberal Party was the main stumbling-block to reform. He thus aborted his own planned alliance of Irish Nationalists and English Radicals, which could well have been politically significant. Instead the Federation was drawn

into the wake of Henry George's tour of Britian in the summer of 1882 and eventually to a declaration of Socialism.

At this time Hyndman and George had much in common on immediate policy if not in their ultimate aims. Thus it was not surprising that George's tour was instrumental in winning a number of middle-class Radicals to the Democratic Federation in 1882 and 1883. Henry Hyde Champion was an ex-artillery officer, having resigned his commission after the Egyptian War of 1881-82. Progress and Poverty so impressed James Leigh Joynes, a Master at Eton, that he travelled to Ireland with Henry George in the summer of 1882. His subsequent account of events there led to his dismissal from Eton. R. P. B. Frost, an old schoolfriend of Champion, joined these two in the spring of 1883 to organise the Land Reform Union, and in June they launched The Christian Socialist as its monthly organ. This was the first avowedly Socialist journal in England since the 1850s. They were joined by recruits from the Secularist Movement such as Herbert Burrows and Ernest Belfort Bax and were immeasurably strengthened by the adherence of William Morris in January 1883. These men were willing to devote their time and money to the Federation. They gave it an articulate leadership, a wider audience via the pages of The Christian Socialist, and, later, Today, and they were also instrumental in turning the party towards ~~Marxism~~.

The first hints of a definite Socialist policy had appeared at the Federation's Conference on 31 May 1882, with the declaration that 'the Federation has consistently opposed

the landlord and capitalist parties who at present control the machinery of state....Those whose labour makes the wealth of these islands must rely on themselves alone.'¹⁰ These tendencies were confirmed by the party's intervention on issues other than Ireland. Members and sympathisers occupied the platform at Holborn Town Hall in November 1882 to oppose Morley's plan for an insurance scheme to be paid for out of workers' wages, which Hyndman called 'compulsory thrift and forced insurance.'¹¹ A further meeting on 19 December was similarly infiltrated, with a Federation handbill proclaiming that

All men and women who work for a master give back to their employers the value of their wages in the first two or three hours of the day's work. All the rest of the production is taken for nothing....¹²

Within the hall the resolution proposing compulsory insurance was overwhelmingly defeated by a DF amendment arguing that the only means of preventing pauperism was 'by securing for the producing classes the fruits of their labour.'¹³ Encouraged by such events William Morris joined the party early in 1883, 'hoping that it would declare for Socialism'.¹⁴ He was not to be disappointed. A series of conferences in February and March discussed a Socialist programme, with Hyndman delivering six lectures on 'Practical Proposals for Pressing Needs', the palliatives which were needed to produce a healthy and better educated working class ready to fight for Socialism. These included free school meals, the eight-hour working day and

nationalisation of the mines and railways. The Federation lecture list demonstrated an increasingly Socialist bias, as a glance at the Clerkenwell branch programme for Spring 1883 confirms.

APRIL 15	William Morris	'Art and Democracy'
APRIL 22	J. L. Joynes	'Socialism'
APRIL 29	Steward Glenny	'Socialism as a Law of Economic Development'
MAY 6	P. Hennessy	'Where Are We Drifting To'
MAY 13	Steward Glenny	'Modern Socialism'
MAY 20	Steward Glenny	'Modern Socialism'
MAY 27	H. H. Champion	'Christian Socialism'
JUNE 3	H. W. Roland	'Signs of Socialistic Advance'

These trends culminated in a declaration of principles at the Second Annual Conference in June, which were then published as a pamphlet, Socialism Made Plain.

Elementary though it was in its statement of Socialist principles this manifesto 'was in reality the official declaration of the Democratic Federation as an avowed and irreconcilable Socialist organisation.'¹⁵ It achieved the largest sale of any Socialist publication in the next decade, over one hundred thousand copies. Socialism Made Plain, said Harry Lee, 'was the pamphlet which first turned my attention to SocialismDoubtless it has had a similar effect on others.'¹⁶

Conversely most of the non-Socialists now resigned, even Dr. G. B. Clark, M.P., who had been associated with the First International, but to compensate a few working-class recruits were made, men such as Quelch and Burns. Briefly summarised the pamphlet argued that social and political power was monopolised by landlords and capitalists, who lived off the labour of the workers. The result was poverty for the working class, wealth for the few, coercion in Ireland and disaster in India. Just as the production of wealth was a collective effort so the Federation demanded that exchange and distribution be placed on a collective basis. Meanwhile it was argued that the party's palliatives had to be adopted as 'stepping stones to a happier period', producing a working class determined 'to take control, finally, of the entire social and political machinery of the State in which class distinctions and class privileges shall cease to be.'¹⁷

Socialism Made Plain was published at a time of growing discontent, when the gulf between rich and poor seemed noticeably greater than ever before.¹⁸ 'Every other movement,' commented one observer, seemed to be 'aiming at a radical revolution in the existing order of things' with 'the Social Democratic Associations of the East End of London....most active.'¹⁹ The Federation stepped up its outdoor propaganda, successfully fighting off the attempted suppression of their meetings at Peckham Rye and in Southwark Park, whilst continuing to carry the Socialist message to the Radical Clubs. Then, in

November, Hyndman published The Historical Basis of Socialism in England. This time he acknowledged Marx's influence, but the work revealed the still confused nature of Hyndman's Socialism and his very narrow interpretation of Marx. He was still motivated by a conception of imperialism, whereby the English speaking and perhaps Teutonic peoples would lead the way to Socialism, a theory later referred to by a fellow Socialist as his 'racial predilections.'²⁰ Hyndman's Marxism, as demonstrated in The Historical Basis, was in fact a dubious mixture of economic history and economic theory, ignoring the philosophical and sociological aspects of Marx. The economic theory was somewhat archaic in that it emphasised the iron law of wages, already rejected by Marx, and used the Radical demand for the workers' right to the 'whole produce of their labour' which Marx regarded as unscientific because of its inherent individualism. More heretical still was Hyndman's attempt to synthesise Marx, Rodbertus and Lassalle. Both he and Rodbertus conceived of Socialism in nationalist terms, both were State Socialists of the paternal variety. Hyndman combined this with xenophobia; he had, for example, been instrumental in September 1882 in carrying a resolution opposing Chinese immigration on the grounds that they 'always remained a distinct race wherever they went....They could swamp us industrially and crowd us out of almost every occupation.....'²¹ He also adopted positions on the Lassallean model with regard to political tactics; outright hostility to Liberal politicians, a tendency to flirt with representatives of the ruling class, and an optimistic view of the possibilities of parliamentary

democracy. Yet, suspect though his Marxism might be, Hyndman was making excellent propaganda, 'providing arsenals of fact and argument for the pioneers.'²² The Socialist message was spreading beyond its hitherto narrow confines.

The Federation made considerable impact with its opposition to State-aided emigration as a panacea for distress, using the by now well-tried tactics of packing meetings in order to propose their own viewpoint. It argued that nationalisation of the land should precede any emigration scheme, for there was a vast area of uncultivated land at home sufficient to provide for all; moreover, the state-aided scheme would simply remove the healthy and leave the sickly, and if applied at all it should begin with 'the useless class of landlords, capitalists and their hangers on.'²³ This campaign was but one in a ceaseless round of activity in the latter half of 1883 which succeeded in pushing the Federation into the public eye, but it did little to increase membership. The number of branches was few, the bulk of the membership of little more than two hundred consisting of individuals from widely scattered parts of London. The strongest branch was that in Marylebone, where James MacDonald had brought over the Central Democratic Association, and Clerkenwell was also active. Although largely middle class in character, there were a small number of very gifted working men within the SDF. Harry Quelch the London meat porter, Harry Lee and Jack Williams could be included in their ranks. Yet, as William Morris commented, these men 'were there by dint of their special intelligence, or of their eccentricity, not as working men simply.'²⁴ Amidst the general

apathy of the working class, and contrary to the Radical loyalty to the Liberal Government, members of the Democratic Federation were very much 'a collection of oddities.'²⁵ Some had joined the Federation because of their disgust at Gladstonian policy in Ireland, others because of their detestation of imperialism in Egypt. Some joined through feelings of guilt over the increasing distress at home. Jack Williams was motivated by the memory of the extreme poverty of his childhood, as was Tom Barclay of Leicester. A few, such as Hyndman, had read Marx and were convinced that capitalism was nearing its final crisis. Some old Chartists anticipated a revival of the movement of their youth. Common to all was hatred, a hatred of capitalism and the leisured class it spawned at the expense of the masses; in Morris's case hatred of a system which had no room for art, a system which devastated the countryside. Socialism inspired these oddities with hope for the future, an optimism shared by Hyndman, who was in buoyant mood at the beginning of 1884.

Hyndman saw events in Ireland and the increasing popularity of land nationalisation as signs that there would soon be 'an organised Social Democracy in these islands.'²⁶ He even went as far as to predict 1889 as the year of the revolution. Although he later tried to dismiss this prediction as a mere gesture of encouragement to his members,²⁷ there is no doubt that Hyndman and others adopted an almost millennial approach to Socialist work in the 1880s. They genuinely believed in the imminence of revolution and regarded the preparation of the working class for that eventuality as a matter of extreme urgency. The problem was that whilst acquainting the well-educated with Socialist principles was

comparatively easy,²⁸ a working-class audience was far harder to obtain. With that in mind, in January 1884, the Federation launched its own weekly journal, Justice, thanks to a donation of £300 from Edward Carpenter. But a wholesale newsagents' boycott restricted circulation, forcing the Federation onto the streets to sell the paper. They made a curious spectacle on the Strand and Fleet Street, 'Morris in his soft hat and blue suit, Champion, Frost and Joynes in the morning garments of the well-to-do, several working men comrades and (Hyndman) in the new frock-coat, with a tall hat and good gloves.' Nonetheless this and a reduction in price from twopence to a penny trebled circulation in the first three months. The launch of Justice was important, but Federation fortunes received an even greater boost in April with a debate between Hyndman and Bradlaugh.

Bradlaugh undoubtedly had the better of the debate. He forced Hyndman onto the defensive with his accusations that the Socialists were importing an alien creed into Britain and inciting violence through their speeches. Yet it is not the details of the debate which are important; the very fact that it took place demonstrated the growing impact of the Socialist message and showed how worried Bradlaugh was by its increasing influence within the radical and secularist milieu. As Edward Royle has commented, debates 'Like modern football matches... offered temporary excitement and entertainment', but more importantly the set debate was 'The most spectacular form of propagandism' in the late nineteenth century, attracting

large audiences and considerable press coverage.³⁰

Consequently the Hyndman-Bradlaugh debate acted as a catalyst within the Secularist Movement. It was discussed at NSS branches up and down the country, at Dewsbury, Bolton, Glasgow, Newcastle and Battersea, a branch which then acted as 'midwife to the Socialism of the area.'³¹ John Burns and Tom Mann were both attracted to the SDF as a result of the controversy. Five thousand copies of the debate were sold out by mid-June and Harry Snell in Nottingham was but one of those who made the transition from Secularism to Socialism after he 'had made a careful study of the debates between Bradlaugh and Henry Mayers Hyndman.'³² Sidney Gimson, a Leicester Secularist, later admitted that 'the discussion of Individualism and Socialism went on furiously and, though I was on the other side, I must admit that Socialism was rapidly gaining converts.'³³ With penetration of the Radical clubs proceeding apace the Democratic Federation was achieving its aim of reaching the politically aware working class.

The heightening economic depression in 1884 allowed the Federation to intervene directly in the industrial field for the first time, and thereby spread the Socialist message to the provinces. In February three members of the executive, Joynes, Williams and MacDonald, were sent to Blackburn to agitate in support of the weavers' strike. Hyndman was quick to point out that, 'A man or a woman thrown into poverty by the action of capitalists, is apt to learn the principles of Justice very quickly.'³⁴ They drew large crowds to their

meetings, and when Hyndman and Morris visited the town at the end of the month over two thousand people were present to hear them. The inaugural branch meeting in March saw the enrolment of sixty members, mainly weavers. Although the strike was eventually lost Justice commented that 'The field is a large one, and not the least promising part is Lancashire,'³⁵ a prediction which would later be amply borne out. A similar intervention was made in the miners' strike in South Staffordshire in July, and a branch was formed at Dudley.

These successes were backed up by increasing open-air propaganda in London and the selling of Justice wherever the opportunity arose. At the Edinburgh franchise demonstration on the 12 July, for example, 400 copies were sold and a similar demonstration at Holmfirth in Yorkshire was also covered. Letters from Bradford and Norwich indicated that branches were about to be formed. 'Undoubtedly the hope is spreading,'³⁶ said Morris and, at its fourth Annual Conference, the organisation finally declared openly for Socialism, changing its name to the Social-Democratic Federation. One immediate result was the affiliation of the Labour Emancipation League and the adoption of most of its programme. Proposals for nationalisation were no longer limited to the railways, banks and land but now included all 'the means of production, distribution and exchange.' Understandably the Federation's radical constitutional proposals were still prominent because the 1884 Franchise Act was not yet operational, but they were further democratised by additions from the LEL list such as the citizen army and advocacy of a referendum to decide on peace and

war. Significantly Hyndman was ousted from the position of permanent president when Lane, supported by Morris, Scheu and others, placed the Executive Council in control of the organisation. Yet this Executive remained overwhelmingly middle class, dominated by those able and often wealthy members who had been instrumental in keeping the Federation afloat during the past three years but who lacked practical organising experience.

This naivety probably explains the unanimous conference resolution 'that no political action should be taken in the way of putting forward candidates at elections, or in any way countenancing the present political system.' It was certainly a factor in the issuing of the SDF manifesto to Trade Unions in September. This manifesto lambasted the unions as an aristocracy of labour content to use 'the middle class capitalist House of Commons' as their mouthpiece. It accused them of class collaboration:- 'You have made friends with the Mammon of Unrighteousness in the shape of the employing class,' whilst 'your less fortunate brethren are suffering and dying by your side.' It also denounced them for discouraging strikes, an issue on which the SDF was somewhat ambivalent at this time. Although it regarded strikes as unwise - 'Until the time comes .. when strikes can be organised and universal throughout not one country but many, it is wiser for the workers to suffer, to protest, and to remember.'³⁷ - when they occurred the SDF supported them, as at Blackburn, and seized the opportunity to spread its propaganda. A special strike committee was formed,

which could report on 13 September that it was in touch with events in Sunderland, Glasgow, Aberdeen, South Staffordshire, Hanley, Blackburn and Clitheroe. The SDF has been severely criticised for its anti-union attitudes, yet at this stage in its history it was probably correct to expose their collaborationist nature; the charges levelled against the TUC were undoubtedly true and the SDF, attempting to build an alternative to the two major parties, had little to lose by their publication. The advent of new unionism would necessitate a very different orientation.

Meanwhile, progress was maintained. The Scottish Land and Labour League, centred on Edinburgh, became the Scottish section of the SDF and assisted the reorganisation of a branch in Glasgow. Branches were formed at Norwich, Leeds and Hull and there was even a short-lived attempt to form a Junior Democratic Federation with its own monthly magazine. More lasting and beneficial for the Federation were its campaigns for free school meals and the unemployed. Jonathan Taylor in Sheffield was the main protagonist of free school meals and all branches were urged to press the matter; this many did and valuable publicity was gained. The unemployed agitation was to prove one of the SDF's most enduring efforts but in the winter of 1884 the organisation was feeling its way in terms of tactics and publicity. Nonetheless, under the banner of 'Work For All - Overwork for None', meetings and parades were held all over London, particularly in the East End, resulting in a number of new branches.

The sheer pace and scale of the Federation's activities in fact overstretched its limited organisation and finance. Branches such as Marylebone claimed one hundred and fifty members yet only one-third paid the penny subscription and fewer still took an active part in the propaganda. Many of the outdoor stations, started through the enthusiasm of local members, were forced to close through lack of speakers. Indefatigable organisers like Jack Williams and George Clifton launched new branches only to find them collapsing unless they personally returned to service them. More importantly the financial situation of the party and Justice was desperate. The paper's main outlet was the open-air meeting and its fortunes fluctuated according to the number of these, but even at the height of the summer campaign it operated at a loss. Publicity parades in the West End of London and a propaganda fund based on weekly subscriptions did little to reduce the Federation's reliance on the personal resources of such as Hyndman and Morris. Yet overall 1884 had been a year of progress. Branches had been established in the provinces, links between political and industrial activity formed. The Federation had important footholds in the Land Reform Union and the Secularist movement, and had recruited prominent radicals. Samuel Bennett, one of the editors of The Radical, formally announced his enrolment thus:-

Hitherto we have been a disjointed army of Advanced Liberals, Radicals, Land Nationalisers, Republicans. Now, for the first time, there seems a chance of a

small united phalanx being formed under the
banner of Socialism. It is the logical
conclusion.... 38

Bennett's small united phalanx was, regrettably, short-lived,
for at the very end of the year a disastrous schism occurred.

At this time most Socialists accepted a certain body of
principles which today would be termed Marxist. However,
agreement on the general aims of Socialism did not extend to the
methods necessary for its achievement. The early Socialists
were pioneers and they were impatient for the moment of
revolution. But how was it to be brought about? In simple
terms the 'right' of the party favoured the parliamentary road
to Socialism, whilst the 'left' wanted a peaceful social
agitation aimed at a genuine revolution which would make a
clean sweep of degraded capitalist culture. Overlaying this
division was the tendency of many Federation members to use the
rhetoric of violent revolution. Hyndman was particularly prone
to this; his phraseology, referred to by Morris as a 'turnip
bogie', had already alienated Helen Taylor and others steeped
in a Radical past, and it grated too on his left-wing opponents
for Hyndman was undoubtedly the leader of the 'right' within the
SDF. He supported parliamentarianism and a programme of
"palliatives", whereas Andreas Scheu and William Morris agreed
with J. L. Mahon that

The social inequality, the existence of a privileged
and a poor class, is caused not by any inadequate
extension of the franchise... but by the class

appropriation of the means and material of making wealth....Parliament is a mere sham of governing.³⁹

Foreign policy was a further cause of friction. Hyndman's view of England as the vanguard of the Socialist Movement antagonised those to whom Socialism and internationalism were synonymous. Eleanor Marx wrote to Wilhelm Liebknecht in January 1885 that 'one of our chief points of conflict with Hyndman is that whereas we wish to make this a really international movement ... Mr. Hyndman, whenever he could do so with impunity, has endeavoured to set English workmen against foreigners.'⁴⁰ Scheu and Bax similarly opposed 'the old Adam of Jingoism'⁴¹ in Hyndman, who also exhibited a distinct anti-semitism, revealed in such remarks as 'that damned Jew' and 'Jew Englishman'.

Genuine political differences were exacerbated by personal antagonisms. Bax was later to comment that theoretical differences were nowhere near as great as he and other dissidents had imagined; 'it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the personal element... was largely at the back of the secession.'⁴² Certainly Morris, Engels and others were exasperated by what they regarded as Hyndman's dictatorial behaviour, his treatment of the Federation as a personal possession. Conversely Hyndman detested Engels, whom he regarded as an arch-manipulator using the international movement for his own ends, and was therefore suspicious of Aveling and Eleanor Marx, Engels' close associates. Between Hyndman

and Andreas Scheu there was little love lost. Scheu had founded the Scottish Land and Labour League because he felt that the SDF was neglecting local sympathy for crofter agitation and for the Irish Land League. This infuriated Hyndman and the truth of the matter is that both sides had some justification for their attitudes. There is abundant evidence of Hyndman's shortcomings but it is less widely realised that he had good reasons for his suspicions of Engels and his group, who purveyed what Sheila Rowbotham has called 'a cliquish rectitude.'⁴³ Whereas men like Morris assumed a basic comradeship between different sections of the left, Marx and Engels had developed a very different style of politics. Having decided a line that line would then be unilaterally imposed, regardless of the views of the Socialists on the spot. Thus Engels played an active, albeit clandestine, role in the preparations for the split in the party. Eleanor Marx, writing to her sister Laura, pointed out that it was after consultation with Engels that they had decided to form a new organisation and rejoiced that 'The General has promised, now we are rid of the unclean elements in the Federation, to help us.'⁴⁴ Furthermore she expected, through Engels, to have German support, for the widening rift was a reflection too of divisions within the continental movement, where 'possibilists' urged an interim 'bourgeois' alliance for immediate reforms, similar to the palliatives favoured by Hyndman.

The problem for those opposing Hyndman was that he, as editor of Justice, dictated the day-to-day policy of the SDF.

Indeed he would go to any length to ensure his control of the organisation. When Scheu's Scottish Land and Labour League attempted to form a branch in Glasgow, Hyndman pre-empted him on a flying visit to Scotland, establishing an SDF branch there with W. J. Nairn as secretary. His opponents despaired and, despite obtaining a majority on the executive, decided to resign. They felt, in Morris's words, that 'the old organisation was not worth having.'⁴⁵ On Monday 29 December the dissidents announced the formation of the Socialist League, and in their manifesto explained their decision to resign. The chief points were that within the SDF there had been, 'a tendency to political opportunism...towards national assertion...to attempts at arbitrary rule.'⁴⁶ These criticisms foretold the future of the SDF, for even at this early stage Hyndman's dominance of the party was apparent, his chauvinism and anti-semitism creating discord. They would occasion further splits; in seceding from the SDF and setting up a rival organisation Morris and his comrades were setting a precedent. Dissidents rarely stayed within the party to fight for their position; this can partly be explained by the intransigence of the Hyndmanite 'old guard' but it proved to be a tactical mistake, weakening an already tiny movement without establishing a viable alternative. Lacking a mass movement to propel it forward the party tended to dissipate its energies in factionalism.

What impact did the departure of the Socialist League

members have upon the SDF? The League took the Merton Abbey, Hammersmith, Woolwich and Leeds branches from the SDF, along with the LEL and the Scottish Land and Labour League, and it established a successful branch at Norwich. The League's total membership however never rose much above five hundred. From the beginning it lacked unity; some of its members were mere anti-Hyndmanites, others thought it premature for a Socialist organisation to perform the duties of a political party and considered its task simply to be the education of the working classes; yet others were anti-parliamentarian or outright anarchists. That it survived at all was due largely to the herculean efforts and charisma of Morris. He was gradually outmanoeuvred by the anarchists, became disillusioned and resigned in the autumn of 1890. His departure ensured the virtual demise of the League. Its significance lay in the fact that it signalled the emergence of a genuine division within the British revolutionary movement. Morris detested what he saw as Hyndman's orientation towards 'a sort of Bismarckian State Socialism', whilst the economically deterministic Hyndman had little time for the ethical concerns of Morris. Genuinely enthralled by what he saw as the revolutionary inevitability of the period Hyndman was merely concerned with preparing for that revolution by whatever means necessary. It is somewhat ironic that Morris, the 'Marxist dreamer', should later be claimed by the reformist ILP and left wing of the Labour Party whilst the SDF, which claimed to be, and was, recognised as the Marxist party, finished its days on the right of the Labour movement.

Still, at the end of 1884 the SDF was in disarray. Morris, writing to Joynes on Christmas Day, highlighted its problem:

/Hyndman's/ aim has been to make the movement seem big, to frighten the powers that be with a turnip bogie which perhaps he almost believes in himself: hence all that insane talk of forcible revolution, when we know that the workers in England are not even touched by the movement; hence the founding of branches which melt away into mere names, the neglect of organisation for fruitless agitation; and worst of all, hence, discreditable intrigue and sowing of suspicion among those who are working for the party.⁴⁷

These faults were perhaps excusable in a young and enthusiastic organisation feeling its way yet believing that time was against it. As Hubert Bland later commented,

The type of man who has the intellectual and moral courage to join a new and unpopular movement has also fully developed the faults of his qualities - obstinacy, vanity, a sort of prickly originality, and a quick impatience of contradiction.⁴⁸

The Federation emerged from the split weakened both financially and intellectually, but its members consciously closed ranks behind Hyndman. John Burns echoed the thoughts of many when he said that Hyndman 'at least had shown some sincerity for socialist principles by advocating them at

street corners on sixty-six consecutive Sundays.'⁴⁹ At least the party had gained homogeneity under an acknowledged leadership, which gave it the advantage over the Socialist League. Quelch later felt that the division had, in fact, been beneficial. 'It put those who were left on their mettle and made some of us active propagandists who but for this disagreeable event might never have become so.'⁵⁰ Solidarity was certainly needed at this time. Morris's departure had sorely depleted the Federation's finances and Justice was, at that time, losing £10 per week. Fund-raising proved inadequate and the SDF had, therefore, to rely on voluntary labour to produce the paper. Harry Lee has recorded the remarkable loyalty and unstinting sacrifices of those volunteers who, for 15 months, gave up their spare time to ensure publication of Justice. The difficulties under which they laboured meant an inevitable deterioration in the quality of the paper. As Lee remembered, 'Justice was, in fact, of more interest to active members of the SDF than even to sympathisers among the public to whom it should have made a special appeal.'⁵¹ This fault remained, to hamper the SDF in its attempts to reach a wider audience. The paper was more a weekly magazine of Socialist theory and history than an agitator amongst and organiser of the workers; it tended to remote propagandist posturing, to internal debate, rather than addressing itself to the daily concerns of the workers whose attention it sought. Ten years later W. J. Nairn voiced a similar complaint. Justice, he said, is a 'Socialist paper written by Socialists for Socialists. There is very little in its columns to induce one

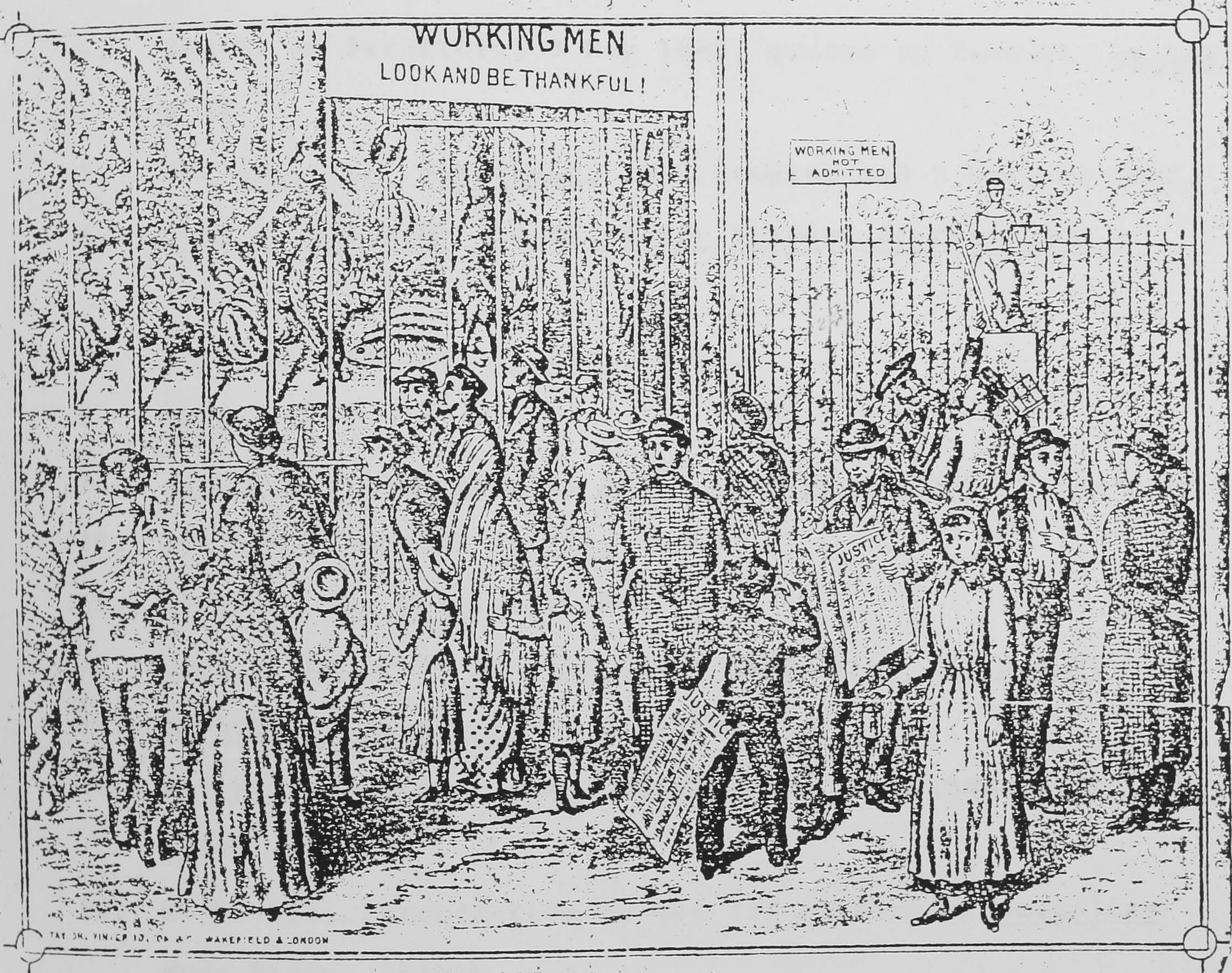
to continue buying it who is not a convinced Socialist'.⁵²
Unattractive in appearance, sterile and dogmatic in form, it failed to be a revolutionary newspaper. Yet the episode demonstrates the Federation's durability, the dedication of its members and, importantly, it signified the growth of a cadre of working-class members, based in the skilled trades of compositing and cabinet making. The departure of William Morris and his supporters was not as severe a blow as it might have been.

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NOTES

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3. Prince Kropotkin, Memoirs of a Revolutionist, (1908 edition), p.40.
4. Engels to Bernstein, 3 May 1883, quoted in Tsuzuki, op.cit., p.48.
5. See Reynolds' Newspaper, 25 September and 2 October 1881.
6. John E. Williams and the Early History of the S.D.F., (1886), p.6.
7. Lee and Archbold, op.cit., p.45.
8. Ibid., p.46.
9. John E Williams and the Early History of the S.D.F., p.6.
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11. Hyndman, The Record, p.306.
12. John E. Williams and the Early History of the S.D.F., p.7.
13. Reynolds' Newspaper, 24 December 1882.
14. Letter to Andreas Scheu, quoted in E. P. Thompson, op.cit., p.301.
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18. See, for example, Reynolds' Newspaper, 5 August 1883.
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20. Today, April 1884.
21. Reynolds' Newspaper, 24 September 1882.

22. E. P. Thompson, op.cit., p.295.
23. John E. Williams and the Early History of the S.D.F., p.8.
24. E. P. Thompson, op.cit., p.298.
25. Ibid.
26. Today, January 1884.
27. Hyndman, The Record, p.341.
28. Hyndman spoke at Oxford University on 30 January and at Cambridge University on 5 February 1884.
29. Hyndman, The Record, p.334.
30. Royle, op.cit., p.154.
31. Ibid., p.50.
32. Lord Snell, Men, Movements and Myself, (1938), p.55.
33. S. Gimson, 'Random Recollections of the Leicester Secular Society. With Digressions", Part I, (1932), p.25, unpublished manuscript, quoted in Royle, op.cit., p.237.
34. Justice, 9 February 1884.
35. Ibid., 1 March 1884.
36. Ibid., 9 August 1884.
37. Ibid., 5 September 1884.
38. Ibid., 14 June 1884. Of 11 British Socialists who contributed to How I Became a Socialist, (1896), eight wrote that they had been Radicals in their youth.
39. Justice, 15 November 1884.
40. Y. Kapp, Eleanor Marx, Volume II, (1979), p.59.
41. Justice, 17 March 1884.
42. E. B. Bax, Reminiscences of a Mid and Late Victorian, (1918), p.79.

43. S. Rowbotham, (ed.), Introduction to The Daughters of Karl Marx: Family Correspondence 1866-1898, (1982), XXXIV.
44. Eleanor Marx to Laura Lofargue, 31 December 1884, in S. Rowbotham, (ed.), op.cit., p.183.
45. Kapp, op.cit., p.61.
46. Ibid., p.63.
47. William Morris's Socialist Diary, edited by Florence Boos, in History Workshop Journal, Issue 13, Spring 1982, p.5.
48. Sunday Chronicle, 26 May 1895, quoted in Pelling, op.cit., p.28.
49. Justice, 31 January 1885.
50. Ibid., 1 January 1898.
51. Lee and Archbold, op.cit., pp.94-5.
52. Justice, 9 March 1895.

CHAPTER III.

A LESSON IN STREET FIGHTING.

Financial difficulties apart the SDF entered 1885 exuding an air of optimism. A Justice editorial was confident that members would 'live to see the reward for the work done.'¹ The paper pointed to the spread of Socialist ideas which could 'be traced by a comparison of the subjects argued in workmen's clubs all over England in the past year with those discussed two or three years ago.'² The point was valid. After an effective and controversial intervention at the 'Industrial Remuneration Conference' John Burns lost his job, a testimony to the dangers involved in Socialist agitation in these early days. But at the heart of the Federation's activity was its campaign for the unemployed, and here it demonstrated a surer grasp of reality than in other areas. As Justice emphasised,

...to tell starving men that the land is theirs, helps them no better than to assure them that the moon is at their disposal for the asking.... What presses more... is the immediate employment, at sufficient wages, of men who demand work and justice, not charity and patronage.³

The work of the Clerkenwell branch is indicative of the efforts made. It distributed leaflets at lodging houses, workhouses, coffee stalls, dock and factory gates, churches and charity kitchens; organised nightly meetings of the unemployed; conducted a census to determine the true figures of

unemployment. At a London demonstration in February, Hyndman accused the government of murder and threatened that if it didn't act now 'it would be their last chance for the workers would have to take other means.'⁴ This veiled threat typified Hyndman's belief at this time that large demonstrations accompanied by threats of violence would force reform, and alarm was certainly stirred in some quarters. Lord Brabazon wrote to The Times warning of the SDF's increasing influence over 'the starving multitudes.'

Yet only a month later Harry Quelch, writing in Justice, demonstrated clearly the essential dichotomy of the Federation's philosophy. He argued forcibly that political activity was vital for Socialists, that they must stand for election to administrative and legislative bodies. To those who regarded such moves as opportunism he pointed out 'that any change, social or political, must necessarily help to break down the present system, and thereby help on the revolution.'⁵ Quelch's article prepared the way for an extraordinary conference in April which reinstated Clauses 1-6 and Clause 11 of the old Democratic Federation programme. Hyndman felt that 'with a political programme we develop into a party rather than a clique.'⁶ A dual strategy of mass extra-parliamentary agitation and electoral activity is not, of course, of itself contradictory. A conscious decision to pursue such a course could have increased SDF influence. Unfortunately the leadership was never sure which line to pursue, tending to ad hoc decisions as the situation arose. This confused the membership, leading to discontent on

both left and right of the party. Two events encapsulated the SDF's inherent weakness.

The Dod Street free speech controversy demonstrated the real gains to be made from a single-issue campaign. Radical clubs and the Socialist League joined forces with the Federation in what became something of a cause célèbre in the East End, culminating in a remarkably quick victory. Whilst the establishment press was horrified at what The Times termed 'successful law-breaking', Reynolds' Newspaper celebrated a 'signal victory for free speech' and argued that 'The workers owe the Socialists a great debt for their courageous and public-spirited action.'⁷ As a result the SDF enhanced its reputation in Radical working-class circles and increased its membership in the East End of London. Outside London too the Federation progressed, with new branches at Walsall, Oldham, and Pendlebury, and a second and third being added to the existing one in Nottingham. But at the end of the year, encouraged by Jonathan Taylor's election to the School Board in Sheffield and the success of the Salford branch in having four members elected onto the Guardians and one to the School Board, a definite political orientation was adopted with disastrous results.

Superficially 1885 appeared a good year to test the political water. The new Reform Act had enfranchised many agricultural workers and more urban workers; the Gladstone administration had lost much of its prestige over the Irish question and the Egyptian war; Joseph Chamberlain led the Radical wing of the Liberal Party in revolt and Randolph Churchill

campaigned for the urban working-class vote under the banner of 'Tory Democracy'. Disowned though they were by their respective party leaders their activities emphasised 'the fact that the 1884 extensions of the electorate meant the end of the already moribund principle of government non-intervention in the economic sphere.'⁸ Hence Sir William Harcourt's famous phrase 'We are all Socialists now', and hence the SDF's decision to contest three constituencies in the general election. A party with less than 1,000 members could hardly hope to win a parliamentary seat, but Hyndman hoped to expose what he regarded as the lying and cheating of the Liberals, split their vote and bring the Radicals over to the Socialist camp.⁹ In the long term this would leave a straight fight between Socialists and their real enemies, the Tories.

Propagandist candidatures would prove very useful to the SDF in later years and could have done so here, as the performance of John Burns in Nottingham demonstrated. Nottingham, a party stronghold with three branches, had been 'nursed' by Burns for some time and he polled a very respectable 598 votes in the face of organised harassment and accusations that he was a Tory agent.¹⁰ But in London the two constituencies chosen were the highly improbable ones of Hampstead and Kennington, where Jack Williams and John Fielding polled 27 and 32 votes respectively. These results exposed the Federation to ridicule but more importantly Hyndman and Champion, acting independently of their executive, had obtained the funds for the contests from the Conservative Party via Maltman Barry, ex-Marxist and member of

the First International. Inevitably a storm of criticism was unleashed when this emerged. Some accused the SDF of corruption, others attacked what they regarded as a gross tactical error. Fabian and Socialist League criticism was to be expected but even that staunch SDFer Jack Williams was moved to argue that 'We cannot trust the middle-class men of our movement any longer.'¹¹ Membership slumped, some following C. L. Fitzgerald into the short-lived Socialist Union. Justice had to be reduced to four pages as subscriptions declined. The effect of this episode was, in Harry Lee's opinion, 'worse than that of the split which led to the formation of the Socialist League, for added to the loss of members was the feeling of depression among those who remained.'¹² The SDF appeared to have destroyed any advances made in the previous two years.

Much of the ire directed at the party was aimed at its acceptance of 'Tory gold', a criticism which Tom Mann and others regarded as 'puritanical nonsense': in the pursuit of Socialism the source of funds was irrelevant. The strategy of voting Tory to split the Liberal Party could be similarly defended: O'Connor had advised Chartists to vote Tory to defeat the Whigs, there was a strong working-class Tory vote in Lancashire, and some Radicals had voted Tory in 1874 in disgust at Liberal resistance to trade-union legislation. Hyndman's and Champion's mistake lay not in taking the money but in using it to finance two patently hopeless contests. Such derisory results made the Federation a laughing-stock. As Engels remarked, the crux of the matter was the discrediting of the

Socialists 'in the eyes of the only class from which they can recruit adherents - i.e. the great Radical working mass.'¹³ Harry Snell assessed the débâcle quite simply: 'Whatever may be the ethical status of the transaction it was as deplorable an illustration of feeble strategy as political leaders had ever provided.'¹⁴ Almost inevitably SDF strategy veered again.

Increasingly effective in its unemployed agitation in London, the SDF called for a major demonstration in Trafalgar Square on Monday 8 February 1886. The police, alarmed at the size of the crowd and worried that heckling from members of the Fair Trade League¹⁵ would lead to disturbances, rerouted the demonstration to Hyde Park where they hoped to disperse the crowd more easily. But en route to the park a small section of the crowd, provoked by catcalling from the Reform Club and the Carlton Club on Pall Mall, smashed windows in the clubs and then looted shops in St. James' Street and Piccadilly. These events were magnified out of all proportion by the press as the 'West End Riots', resulting in enormous publicity for the SDF. This was further boosted by the subsequent trial of Hyndman, Burns, Champion and Williams on charges of seditious conspiracy, a trial which Burns in particular used to great effect as a political platform. The four were acquitted and left the court with their reputations, and that of the SDF, greatly enhanced. Bax accurately assessed the situation when he said that 'the whole affair of the riots, from beginning to end, was a tremendous achievement for Socialism, especially the S.D.F.'¹⁶ Understandably these events, coming so soon after the election

fiasco, reinforced the apocalyptic bent of the Federation.

On the day after the riots Hyndman and Champion gave an amazing interview to the Pall Mall Gazette, full of veiled threats to the Establishment. When asked what they would do if the government still refused to initiate relief works for the unemployed Hyndman replied: 'Probably we shall disappear for six months altogether and then you shall hear of us in a much more serious fashion.... One thing is certain...we dare not go back even if we would.' Champion, heightening the melodrama, said that he knew

two men who each might be guaranteed to kill Hyndman if he sells the cause.... We do not care for our lives, and when you find a band of resolute men who are willing to die in defence of their cause you may depend upon it this trouble will not soon be over-past....¹⁷

Hyndman was not alone in seeing the events of February 1886 as 'The beginning of the great English Revolution of the Nineteenth Century.'¹⁸

The 'riots' may have catapulted the Federation into the public eye but the steady 'slog' of local unemployed agitation was also beginning to produce results. The SDF demand for municipal and state aid was revolutionary and thus its deputations to government offices had little effect, but demands to the local authorities, particularly when they coincided with vestry and School Board elections, helped to expose the corruptio

of local government and pave the way for the Local Government Act of 1888. Church parades, an old Chartist practice, were also revived, culminating in a great procession to St. Paul's Cathedral on 27 February 1887. These were effective demonstrations 'in days when respectable citizens were expected to be seen attending the public worship of an officially Christian God.'¹⁹

This unemployed agitation coincided with the campaign for free speech in London, in which the Socialists combined with London Radicalism. They planned a major demonstration on the day of the Lord Mayor's Show in November 1886, an event ridiculed by Quelch as 'Bumble's Beanfeast'.²⁰ When the authorities banned both the unemployed march and a meeting in Trafalgar Square, surrounding the Square with 6,000 police, the SDF again scored a considerable propaganda success. John Ward and Tom Mann broke through the police lines to deliver speeches from the foot of Nelson's Column. Street politics seemed to be paying dividends, arousing interest outside the capital. An interested onlooker at Trafalgar Square was Ben Turner, a mill-worker from Huddersfield who had been sent to London by his fellow workers to report on the SDF agitation; he joined the SDF at the end of the year. In London itself the movement was growing apace. At the beginning of 1886 the metropolis had nine branches but by the end of the year it claimed 21. Batterse alone claimed 500 members²¹, and four clubs had been established. The Ipswich Free Press reported the London Radical Clubs as 'saturated with Socialistic opinions,'²² and even Engels had to

admit that the SDF had developed 'a very powerful tail.'²³

Hyndman was euphoric and quite convinced that political action was after all of little value. 'It is the immediate duty of every Social-Democrat to neglect politics,' he said; 'we have much more chance of getting revolutionary political change through vehement social agitation, than we have of obtaining any great social change through mere political action.'

²⁴ In Tunbridge Wells, Limehouse and Bermondsey the unemployed were taken on by the municipality for snow clearing and at the sewage works. Thus the local press talked of the SDF with respect. Quelch became a local celebrity in Bermondsey, dubbed 'Quelch the Tyrant Queller' by the South London Press.²⁵

Equally important was an apparent breakthrough in Northumberland, where the miners went on strike for four months at the beginning of 1887. Old Radical and Chartist traditions lingered on in the Northumberland coalfield, where economic realities provided ready audiences for debates on economic theory. The miners' faith in an extension of the franchise as the solution to their problems had been rudely shaken by the performance of their M.P.s and in 1887 they voted against paying Burt's parliamentary salary. The area seemed ripe for SDF intervention. Jack Williams, Tom Mann and others travelled north and intervened very successfully in the strike, forming ten branches by the end of July. Elsewhere in the provinces, Salford, Bolton and Edinburgh branches were also flourishing, whilst Blackburn had stabilised after a series of crises. At the Annual Conference for 1887 48 branches were reported and at the end of the year Justice, now paying its way, was increased

THE UNEMPLOYED

OF THE

HOLBORN UNION

WILL ASSEMBLE

On Clerkenwell Green,

AT TWO O'CLOCK

On Saturday, 1st January, 1887,

And, under the direction of the

Clerkenwell Branch, Social-Democratic Federation,

WILL THEN

March to the Workhouse

To Demand Relief.

THE STARVING POOR OF OLD ENGLAND.

Tune—"Union Jack."

Let them brag until in the face they are black,
That over oceans they hold their sway,
Of the Flag of Old England, the Union Jack,
About which I've something to say,
'Tis said that it floats o'er the free, but it waves
Over thousands of hard-worked ill-paid British
slaves,
Who are driven to pauper and suicide graves,
The starving poor of old England!

CHORUS—

'Tis the poor, the poor, the taxes have to pay,
The poor who are starving every day,
Who starve and die on the Queen's highway,
The starving poor of Old England!
There's the slaves of the needle, and the slaves of
the mine,
The postmen and sons of the plough,

And the hard-worked servants on the railway line,
Who get little by the sweat of their brow,
'Tis said that the labourer is worthy his hire,
But of whom does he get it we'd like to enquire,
Not of any mill-owner, or farmer, or squire,
Who grind down the poor of Old England!

—CHORUS.

Old England's a dear native land in its way
For those who have plenty of gold,
They thieve all the land on the sides of the way,
And heap up their riches untold;
'Tis dear to the rich, but too dear for the poor,
When hunger stalks in at every door,
But not much longer these evils we'll endure,
We the working-men of Old England!

—CHORUS.

A HANDBILL WHICH SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

once more to eight pages. Jonathan Taylor, a veteran of some 30 years social and political agitation, could remember no movement 'in which the progress has been so rapid as the progress of the Social-Democratic Federation.'²⁶

The culmination of almost two years of agitation around the issues of unemployment and free speech came in November 1887, when the SDF was once more catapulted into the headlines on what came to be known as 'Bloody Sunday'. Sir Charles Warren, the Police Commissioner, had banned all public meetings in Trafalgar Square. To test that ban the Metropolitan Federation of Radical Clubs, backed by the SDF and the Socialist League, had called a demonstration against coercion in Ireland for 13 November. The events of that day are well-known. The authorities were well prepared, with 4,000 police and 600 troops at their disposal; many of the contingents of demonstrators were intercepted before they even reached Trafalgar Square; over 200 people were treated in hospital and 150 arrested, including John Burns. A week later a protest meeting in Hyde Park resulted in the death of Alfred Linnell and the largest funeral procession in London since that of the Duke of Wellington in 1852. Hyndman was convinced that revolution was imminent. 'Strength breeds strength and numbers encourage numbers more',²⁷ he said. John Burns also thought initially that 'a revolutionary epoch has commenced...we may ere long be face to face with revolution.'²⁸

Yet 'Bloody Sunday', far from being the first battle of the revolution, was rather the end of the first phase of the

Socialist movement, the conclusion of its infancy. It destroyed for many the illusion that the revolution was just around the corner and demonstrated clearly the utter futility of insurrectionary methods. As William Morris realised, 'Sir Charles Warren has given us a lesson in street-fighting.'²⁹ H. H. Champion had come to a similar conclusion a year earlier, arguing that 'the role of street fighting was over'³⁰ because of the modern weaponry at the disposal of the state. Burns, his revolutionary ardour cooled, was forced to agree and Tom Mann had always doubted the possibility of violent revolution in England. There were those too who contrasted Hyndman's absence during the events of 'Bloody Sunday' with his vitriolic speeches.³¹ His 'turnip bogey' had failed to intimidate the state into making concessions and it had deterred potential recruits. At the end of 1887 the SDF's huge expenditure of energy had failed to attract large numbers of new members; its influence had proved illusory, its support based on single issue campaigns, where all offers of assistance are welcome, rather than an acceptance of its Socialist philosophy. Once again the question of tactics became a burning issue within the party, Champion and Mann in particular questioning its strategy. Mann struck at the heart of the problem when he pleaded for consistency, 'asking our comrades not to preach constitutionalism one half hour and oppose it the next.'³² Their arguments with Hyndman highlighted the confused orientation of the SDF, and Mann's activities in the mid-1880s are a clear demonstration of the problems which this confusion caused in terms of organisation, particularly outside London.

NOTES.

1. Justice, 3 January 1885.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 24 January 1885.
4. Reynolds' Newspaper, 22 February 1885.
5. Justice, 28 March 1885.
6. Ibid., 11 April 1885.
7. Reynolds' Newspaper, 4 October 1885.
8. Pelling, op.cit., p.39.
9. Justice, 14 November 1885.
10. For an account of the campaign and the SDF in Nottingham see P. Wyncoll, The Nottingham Labour Movement 1880-1939, (1985).
11. Justice, 12 December 1885.
12. Lee and Archbold, op.cit., p.109.
13. Engels to Bernstein, 7 December 1885, quoted in Torr, op.cit. p.196.
14. Snell, op.cit., p.64.
15. The Fair Trade League was an organisation, backed by prominent Conservatives, which urged industrial reciprocity as a solution to economic distress.
16. Bax, op.cit., p.86.
17. Pall Mall Gazette, 9 February 1886, quoted in Torr, op.cit., p.228.
18. Justice, 20 February 1886.
19. Torr, op.cit., p.229.
20. Justice, 6 November 1886.

21. Ibid., 22 May 1886. This figure must be treated with some caution. Watmough, op.cit., estimates a total London membership of 390 at this time. The difference can be explained by the fact that many SDF members failed to pay subscriptions, whilst branches often deliberately under-reported their membership in order to retain a portion of the subscriptions for their own use.
22. Quoted in Justice, 24 April 1886.
23. Quoted in Tsuzuki, Hyndman and British Socialism, p.77.
24. Justice, 1 January 1887.
25. South London Press, 8 January 1887.
26. Justice, 15 October 1887.
27. Ibid., 24 December 1887.
28. Ibid., 3 December 1887.
29. Quoted in Torr, op.cit., p.260.
30. Justice, 14 August 1887.
31. Reynolds' Newspaper, 27 November 1887.
32. Justice, 26 February 1887.

CHAPTER IV.

TO MAKE TWELVE O'CLOCK AT ELEVEN.

After 1887 the worst of the depression was over and the numbers of unemployed decreased. The SDF, which had concentrated its agitation on this issue, was therefore forced to scale down its activities or risk anti-climax. As William Morris commented, ironically but pertinently, 'they must always be getting up some fresh excitement, or else making the thing stale and at last ridiculous; so that they are rather in the position of a hard-pressed manager of a theatre - what are they to do next?'¹ The party's failure to develop a consistent policy made this a pressing question, one which provoked a rupture between Hyndman and several leading party members, including H. H. Champion.

Champion, one-time Hyndman loyalist and first secretary of the SDF, had taken a leading role in the unemployed campaigns and at the time of the West End riots was much impressed by insurrectionary possibilities. The events of 1886 and 1887 had convinced him of the power of the state and led him to seek a more practical policy. In May 1887 he started a monthly paper, Common Sense, which advocated the formation of a Labour Party by strengthening the independent forces within the Labour Electoral Committee, an organisation established by the TUC in 1886. Champion attacked the 'vacillating tactics and absence of definite policy' of the SDF² and emphasised the enormity of the gap between the party's ambition of 'overthrowing class

domination' and its meagre membership. Like Engels he urged the subordination of Socialist consciousness to the immediate struggles of the workers; Socialists should demonstrate to the working class how self-activity could be translated into progress towards Socialism. The reaction from Hyndman and others to these arguments soon convinced Champion that there was little hope of the SDF coming to grips with reality. Herbert Burrows argued that the party was 'in danger of tending too much towards realism and too little towards idealism'. The eight-hour bill, adult suffrage and the like were not the Social Revolution and 'time spent on them as isolated parts of a programme is so much time taken from the vastly more important work of making people Social-Democrats by teaching them Social-Democracy'.³ As A. P. Hazell succinctly remarked, 'Virtue is its own reward'.⁴ A belief in the righteousness of their cause and in the inevitability of revolution led automatically to the view that activities along the lines advocated by Champion, building bridges to the working class, were a waste of time. Yet Champion was not an isolated voice. John L. Mahon was concentrating his efforts on the Northumbrian coalfield; John Burns, rapidly moderating his views, was building a base in Battersea; most significantly Tom Mann was also becoming disenchanted with SDF orientation. His career in the late 1880s demonstrates clearly his differences with the leadership, but it also provides a very necessary counter-balance to the picture of SDF success propagated through conference reports and the pages of Justice in those years. Equally importantly, it counteracts the

tendency to examine the SDF through the distorting lens of the activities and opinions of its leadership.

Mann had crossed swords with Hyndman soon after joining the Federation, when he had urged cooperation with the trade unions. As he later recalled, this brought Hyndman to his feet in a rage. 'What were these precious unions? By whom were they led? By the most stodgy-brained, dull-witted, and slow-going time-servers in the country.'⁵ Mann agreed with Hyndman's indictment of the craft unions, but he could not understand his dismissal of trade union work; the increasingly uttered assumption that all trade unionists were alike would, he realised, alienate them from the SDF. The key to trade-union work, as Mann saw it, was the propaganda for the eight-hour day, a measure to benefit all which would break down the barriers between skilled and unskilled workers, reduce unemployment and give the working class increased leisure time. This demand was in the SDF programme, but it was paid little more than lip-service. Interestingly enough, when Mann raised the issue at a Battersea branch meeting it was belittled by none other than John Burns.

Tom ploughed a lonely furrow, organising an Eight Hour League in Battersea and issuing his first pamphlet, What a compulsory eight-hour working day means to the workers. The Federation ignored the pamphlet, provoking him into retaliation. 'Surely one should not have to appeal in vain to brother Socialists for co-operation in a measure of this kind'⁶, he wrote in Justice, but his appeal fell on deaf ears. Harry

Quelch and others were busy organising drill instructions as a means of disciplining their members on the unemployed marches, and they saw no reason to expend their energy on what they regarded as a lost cause. Even when the official party line softened somewhat in 1887 in response to increasing support for the eight-hour day no serious effort was made to involve the Federation as an organisation, and the party seemed oblivious to the rising tide of discontent within the TUC. The struggle for the eight-hour day would become increasingly important in the Labour movement, the touchstone of new unionism, enshrined as TUC policy in 1890 and proposed as a solution to unemployment. It would turn Liberal trade unionists into trade union collectivists. Yet the SDF's leaders regarded the campaign as a diversion from the struggle for Socialism; the flexible attitude of 1884 had hardened into a lofty contempt for the unions which disillusioned militants like Mann. During the whirlwind months of 1886 and 1887 his doubts were pushed to the back of his mind, but as the frenetic activity of the unemployed demonstrations subsided they resurfaced.

Superficially the Northumbrian campaign had been one of the SDF success stories of 1887, with 10 branches being reported at that year's conference and 18 at the beginning of 1888. Mann's energy and capability as an organiser were undoubtedly responsible for much of this success. His Memoirs record the hard grind of a Socialist agitator in this period. In London he rose at 5 a.m. to be at work for 6:-

Every weekend I was busy on propaganda work, usually speaking three times on the Sunday - twice in the open air and once indoors. Often the round would be near the Bricklayer's Arms, Old Kent Road, at 11 a.m; Victoria Park in the East End, 3.30 p.m; and indoors at some branch meeting or other public gathering in the evening, rarely reaching home before 11 p.m; to be up at 5 next morning.⁷

At Newcastle in May 1887 he was addressing as many as 11 meetings a week, three on Sundays and then around the pit villages during the week. A perusal of branch reports in Justice indicates a similar punishing routine for other activists but such enthusiasm can only be sustained by success, and by the end of the year Mann was rather disillusioned by events in the North-East.

Once the miners' strike was over the task was one of consolidation and in Newcastle Mann was quite successful in this task. He caused a local sensation by organising a series of church parades, which persuaded the council to provide some employment and to take up his suggestion of tree planting on Town Moor. He established a branch which had three members elected to the Newcastle School Board at the beginning of 1889. But outside Newcastle the branches quickly withered as the miners returned to work; Ashington branch, for example, began with 150 members but eventually collapsed. One reason for

this was that many members were unemployed and could not afford subscriptions; others were forced to leave the area in search of work. The abiding lesson, however, was that single-issue campaigns bred momentary success but did not generate long-term recruitment. Local organisers of any ability were hard to come by and the party nationally could not afford to subsidise full-time organisers. Thus Tom Mann was forced to seek employment, and was twice victimised for his political activities. Harry Lee later remembered how Mann had been forced to sell his books and other belongings in order to survive.⁸ Local difficulties, though, were only part of the story. The national leadership of the SDF provided very little support for Mann in what should have been seen as a key area for expansion; there were even accusations that Mann was a paid agitator living off the movement,⁹ and he rapidly became disenchanted with the internal wranglings which retarded the movement's progress. In despair he asked Burns,

Do you think the S.D.F. as an organisation will ever develop to considerable proportions? I confess it looks horribly slow work. I can't see much headway that's been made the last eighteen months as an organisation.... Men will not pay to an inactive organisation.... Justice will not sell, no matter how skilfully its handled....¹⁰

Eventually Tom left Newcastle for Bolton at the invitation of a branch greatly stimulated by the recent engineers' strike. He was offered a newsagents' and tobacconists' shop to finance

his activities as branch organiser and again he achieved amazing initial results. Within three months Bolton branch membership rose from 50 to 170, and his work in Blackburn, Darwen and surrounding districts was similarly successful. Blackburn, the earliest of the Lancashire branches, provides a typical example of a provincial branch in the 1880s. Founded during the weavers' strike in 1884 with an initial membership of 60, by 1887 it struggled to exist, boasting only six members. These faced overwhelming difficulties; as one later recalled, 'any visiting speaker used to take farewell of his family; there was a strong possibility he would be brought home in a shuttle', because in 1888

the few socialists of Blackburn were routed Sunday after Sunday from the Market Place. An organised gang of roughs headed by an ex-police sergeant had to give both speakers and what few members were there a taste of "Lancashire heels."¹¹

Mann's visits stabilised the branch so that it 'became respected where they formerly had to be constantly ready for fisticuff work',¹² and Justice reported in May 1889, after a successful demonstration, 'that the S.D.F. had regained on a much more extended scale all the pristine vigour of its early days'.¹³

Prospects then seemed rosy in industrial Lancashire, widely regarded as a Tory working-class citadel. In many cases Tory votes were cast purely in opposition to their Liberal factory

masters and Mann reported 'a number of Tories prepared to go to any lengths on labour questions'.¹⁴ An early convert of his was Charles Glyde, later an eminent Bradford Socialist and town councillor. Glyde remembered Tom's speeches as 'marvels of eloquence and power' which drew huge crowds to the Town Hall Steps in Bolton. This led to police charges of obstruction and a free speech campaign which was won 'hands down...they dared not prosecute him, he never received a summons; he vindicated and won the right of public meetings on the Town Hall Steps.'¹⁵ Bolton branch seemingly flourished; its hall was open every night, it had a Shelley debating society with 30 members, a store for tea, drapery and clothing and a co-operative workshop. Yet, as in the North-East, appearances were deceptive and Mann again grew disillusioned.

The tobacco shop failed to pay its way, whilst the branch suffered internal dissensions paralleling those at a national level. When, for example, Mann provided one member with some literature concerning the National Labour Electoral Association he was castigated for acting to the detriment of the SDF; when sales of Justice fell his shop bore the loss and therefore Tom handed responsibility for the paper to the branch committee, suggesting they order less - this was taken in London as a sign of animosity to the party. Mann was similarly depressed by the Manchester branch:- 'there is no branch there worth speaking about except to condemn it', he wrote to Burns. The Manchester branch is illustrative of the difficulties involved in creating an accurate picture of SDF fortunes. The

pages of Justice suggest a very active branch under the tutelage of J. Hunter Watts, ceaseless propaganda helping to form new branches at Bury and Pendleton, to revive that at Oldham, and to carry the message into Derbyshire. In September 1888 Watts was reporting the largest meetings ever.¹⁶ But Mann painted a very different picture:-

Watts seemed to think it desirable to work with a few young bundle handkerchief men who really don't care a damn for Socialism or any other ism except what may tickle them for a wee while. I am determined not to work with such riffraff. I'll see the whole thing in blazes rather than be a mere street corner cheap jack and entertain a few insignificant nothings....¹⁷

The truth of the matter probably lay between the two. An analysis of branch subscriptions shows that Manchester had only ten paying members that year, far less than its reports to Justice would indicate. In common with many other branches a few members were carrying the bulk of the work and Mann was undoubtedly unfair to decry their efforts. The problem was, and is with many revolutionary organisations operating in unpromising circumstances, that the activity became self-justificatory, the party a way of life, the members inward looking. Mann's reference to Watts as 'a mere street corner cheap Jack' indicates his view of SDF policy at that time. To a man active in his union, attending international trade union conferences and propounding the eight-hour day, the mere propagandising of the

Federation seemed sterile. He refused to attend the annual conference in 1888, yet at that conference differences came to a head.

The clashes tended to be between the provincial delegates and those from London, although the former were weakened by the fact that few branches could afford to send delegates to a London conference. Some asked a London member to represent them but even then fewer than half the party's branches had delegates. This partly explains the London domination of the Federation, to remedy which a delegate council had replaced the executive council in 1887. Southwark branch now proposed to reinstate the executive, arguing that a delegate council was ineffective, particularly in an emergency. The provinces protested loudly, complaining of a lack of democracy, with Tanner of Birmingham arguing that 'it was impossible for an executive council of London men to know what would best apply to the provinces',¹⁸ a salient comment in the light of Mann's experiences. Tanner argued in vain, and he did so again when a resolution was carried forbidding parliamentary candidatures unless they were as 'definitely avowed Social-Democrats with the consent of the parliamentary committee'.¹⁹ Local autonomy was not to be permitted. Hyndman and his supporters should have heeded Lee's report to the Conference, which provided salutary listening. Membership and the number of branches had declined, the problem being that 'there is wanting that nucleus of a few speakers and organisers in each town which is absolutely necessary to keep a good branch afloat'.²⁰ William Morris had recognised this at

the time of his defection, commenting on 'the founding of branches which melt away into mere names.'²¹ Only where full-time organisers were in the field could continuity be guaranteed and the SDF could not afford to employ them. Many areas relied on visiting speakers, hence the exhausting itinerary of many prominent members, and increasingly there were complaints in Justice of speakers failing to turn up. Branches where capable local leaders emerged - Burns in Battersea, George Tabbron in Salford, Tanner in Birmingham - were the exception not the rule. Lee optimistically closed his report with these words:- 'It is the men and women who remain with and do the everyday routine work of the organisation...who will carry on the Social-Democratic movement in the face of all difficulties and dangers.'²² The problem was that Mann, Champion and others were beginning to doubt whether the results of their efforts were worthwhile.

A gesture was made to the opposition at the beginning of September when the SDF issued a Parliamentary Manifesto in favour of 'direct political and parliamentary action' but, as ever, there was a sting in the tail. Only candidates who supported the class war were to be supported; Liberals and Radicals were anathema, worse enemies of the Socialists even than the Tories. And there was no repudiation of violence! As another Birmingham member, Haddon, commented, the manifesto was contradictory and therefore ineffective. Either they should wait for the conversion of a majority to Socialism or they should organise along the lines suggested by Champion. This

was now impossible. Hyndman had openly attacked Champion in Justice, accusing him of consorting with 'unscrupulous intriguers', a reference to Maltman Barry, and questioning whether he was 'a fit and proper person to sit on the committees of the S.D.F.'²³ Although censured by the General Council for using the party paper 'to circulate a one-sided expression of personal opinion',²⁴ Hyndman was undaunted and, supported by the new executive, continued his attacks on Champion. He condemned him for 'disgraceful trafficking with a notorious agent of reaction', and in November Champion was expelled from the SDF. These events demonstrated Hyndman's quasi-dictatorial control of the party at this time and his virtual dismissal of events outside London.

Burns and Mann remained in the Federation a while longer but eventually they too drifted away. As Tsuzuki has commented, this meant 'that the men who were later to come to the fore in both industrial and political leadership of the working class were initially hostile to Hyndman and hence the SDF.'²⁵ Meanwhile the party was increasingly isolated, membership declined and sales of Justice slumped; the Pall Mall Gazette referred to the 'stagnation' of the Socialist movement.²⁶ Hyndman responded, almost inevitably, with a further change of orientation but this time he espoused a more practical policy which seemingly offered some hopes of success.

In 1888 Hyndman wrote A Commune for London which, in spite of Fabian claims to the contrary, was the first argument for municipal Socialism. He again concentrated on London, the

economic and political centre of England, which he envisaged leading the way to Socialism. His main demands were for annual election by adult suffrage to all offices and for the Metropolitan police to be directly accountable to the people. Hyndman also argued for giving the new corporation power to provide public works for the unemployed, a network of social services and to employ direct labour. This concentration on municipal politics was emphasised by Herbert Burrows: 'The Socialism of the future will be the Socialism of the municipality and it is in this direction that our most strenuous efforts should be made.'²⁷ The Fabians and the ILP were not, therefore, the sole proponents of the municipal Socialist cause and the SDF repeatedly returned to the theme. William Morris and Belfort Bax in 1893²⁸ praised municipal enterprise as a means of decentralising control and offsetting the trend towards bureaucracy. Ten years later Theodore Rothstein listed the advantages of municipal enterprise as being a deterrent to monopoly, a source of revenue for public use, a practical demonstration of the advantages of public ownership and a training ground for Socialists. The difference between the Fabians and the ILP on the one hand and the SDF on the other was one of emphasis. Whereas the former saw municipalisation as part of a wider, gradualist parliamentary road to Socialism, which did not require the abolition of capitalism, the SDF treated it as a transitional programme, a stepping stone to the ultimate goal of control over the means of production, distribution and exchange. Nonetheless, concluded Rothstein, the local authorities could be used as a source of 'democratic

and non-capitalist power against the State'.²⁹

The new pragmatism found further expression with the formation of a Central Democratic Committee for the London School Board elections in November, the SDF joining forces with the Metropolitan Radical Federation, the London Secular Society and the Fabians. Of seven SDF candidates three were elected and thus heartened the party prepared for elections to the new London County Council, issuing a list of 14 points to be put to all candidates and standing four of its own. Burns was elected by a majority of 800 over his nearest opponent, a result greeted with rapture. 'England is at last on the move', exulted Justice, for the SDF now had representatives on the London County Council, the London School Board, on the Tottenham and Newcastle School Boards and on Walsall Municipal Council.³⁰

The euphoria was again rather premature. John Burns was not a typical SDFer and the other Federation candidates had polled poorly. Progressive Radicalism had re-emerged as a political force in 1889 after its heavy defeats by the Tories in 1885 and 1886. Stung by this a London Liberal and Radical Union had been founded in 1887, backed by The Star, which campaigned for a new and progressive Liberalism. The real lesson of the 1889 election, says Paul Thompson, was that 'the Progressives, by standing on a thoroughly radical programme, had been able to take the wind out of the Socialist sails.'³¹ The SDF strategy of detaching Radicals from the Liberal Party was far from realisation, although the party's propaganda had obviously made some impact on the capital in the 1880s.

Nonetheless, municipal Socialism was the new 'enthusiasm' of the Social-Democratic Federation, ironically so in view of the calumny heaped upon Champion. Both Hyndman and Bax accused him of trying 'to make twelve o'clock at eleven',³² by intriguing with Tories to bring about reforms in his own day, Hyndman conveniently forgetting his own role in the 'Tory gold' affair. Yet it seemed that Hyndman himself was becoming sceptical of arriving at 'twelve o'clock', the inevitability of which he had proclaimed for a decade. At the end of 1888 the revolutionary rhetoric had given way, albeit temporarily, to a more pragmatic approach which promised more tangible gains. Hyndman had long heralded 1889 as the year of revolution; the events of that year would provide the SDF with a much more favourable environment in which to operate.

NOTES.

1. 'William Morris's Socialist Diary', op.cit., 3 March 1887.
2. Common Sense, 15 September 1887.
3. Justice, 2 June 1888.
4. Ibid., 21 April 1888.
5. T. Mann, Memoirs, (1923), p.40.
6. Justice, 30 October 1886.
7. Mann, Memoirs, p.26.
8. Lee and Archbold, op.cit., p.123.
9. Torr, op.cit., p.244.
10. Ibid., p.250.
11. Justice, 27 May 1892.
12. Mann to Burns, n.d., quoted in Torr, op.cit., p.255.
13. Justice, 20 May 1889.
14. Torr, op.cit., p.251.
15. Socialist Vanguard, 25 August 1923.
16. Justice, 1 September 1888.
17. Mann to Burns, 25 June 1888, quoted in Torr, op.cit., p.253.
18. Justice, 11 August 1888.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Morris to Joynes, Christmas Day 1884, quoted in F. Boos,
Introduction to 'William Morris's Socialist Diary', op.cit.,
p.5.
22. Justice, 11 August 1888.
23. Ibid., 20 October 1888.
24. Ibid., 27 October 1888.

25. Tsuzuki, Hyndman and British Socialism, p.83.
26. Pall Mall Gazette, 7 November 1888.
27. Justice, 29 September 1888.
28. W. Morris and E. B. Bax, Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome, (1893), pp.277-283.
29. Social Democrat, April 1903.
30. Justice, 26 January and 2 February 1889.
31. P. Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour: The Struggle for London 1885-1914, (1967), p.101.
32. Hyndman, The Record, p.309 and Bax, op.cit., p.101.

CHAPTER V.

A TINY CARAVAN OF MISSIONARIES.

Although the SDF began 1889 in financial difficulties, with Justice once more limited to four pages, Hyndman was typically optimistic of success. Yet, in a year which saw the greatest explosion of working-class unrest for fifty years, the Federation failed to make the progress which he anticipated. It remained a small grouping isolated from the mainstream of the Labour movement. Why was the party unable to take advantage of the undoubted opportunities of that year?

Early in 1889 Hyndman called upon the party to work for the election of SDF Members of Parliament, but Herbert Burrows emerged from a London aggregate in May to report continued differences of opinion over the question of political activity. Burrows argued that it was preferable for an Eight-Hour Bill to be postponed rather than elect to Parliament its non-Socialist supporters, men who would then proceed to vote for anti-Socialist legislation. He still saw the SDF's task as one of education, of the formation of public opinion in readiness for the coming revolution. 'Get as many of our palliatives as we can', he said, 'but do not accept them when mixed up with anti-Socialist measures which will simply neutralise them'.¹ The London meeting had decided to heckle any candidate who did not support the class war and advocated a policy of abstention in any constituency with a strong SDF

presence, a policy which could only work to the advantage of the Tories. Burrows supported municipal, as opposed to national, electoral activity, an argument with some force in view of the vagaries of the franchise arrangements, and he claimed the support of the majority of London members for this point of view.

A similar ambiguity existed in the Federation's relationship with the international movement. Hyndman had always been antagonistic towards the German Socialist Party, which he accused of attempting to dominate its weaker counterparts. The SDF policy was that national parties should adopt their own tactics according to the circumstances in their own country. In 1888 the Federation urged support, somewhat surprisingly in the light of its antipathy towards trade unionism, for an International Conference on the Eight-Hour Day, called by the TUC and the French Possibilists. This position ignored the exclusion of the German Socialists from the Conference, justified on the grounds that they were not bona fide trade unionists. The dispute carried over into 1889, when two rival congresses were planned in Paris. One, the International Socialist Labour Congress, was convened by the Marxists and was open to all Socialist and working-class representatives - it became the founding conference of the Second International. The other, 'Possibilist', International Workers Congress had been decided upon by the London conference the year before and its terms of reference would exclude many Marxists. Divisions amongst French Socialists were largely responsible for this situation,² but the events surrounding

the congresses also demonstrated clearly the petty squabbles which plagued the British Socialists and Hyndman's erratic leadership.

Hyndman associated himself with the Possibilists, essentially because of his personal animosity towards the German Socialists, Engels and the Avelings, yet they were engaged in the self-same parliamentary manoeuvring which he had repeatedly condemned in Broadhurst, Burt and other English trade union leaders. He thus prevented a united British delegation to Paris, for Mann, Champion and even Keir Hardie were attending the Marxist conference 'to stand out against Broadhurst and Co. and show that not all the English workers are at the tail of these gentlemen.'³ The upshot was an unseemly public dispute between Hyndman and Engels which only served to discredit the Socialists.⁴ Eventually 15 SDF branches were represented at the Possibilist congress,⁵ and they were instrumental in preventing the suggested amalgamation of the two conferences. John Burns, who was eligible to attend both, hit at the crux of the matter:

The most amusing, nay villainous part of this business was that the objections to fusion came not from men... who represented vast organisations, but from men like Hyndman, sent by 28 persons, and by Burrows, who was so doubtful of the bona fides of the Clerkenwell branch of the SDF as to get a double-barrelled mandate from some other people who knew nothing of

Socialism and if they did would have sent someone else.⁶

Burns himself eventually attended the Marxist congress. Even more ironically the Marxists declared the Eight-Hour Day the most important item on their agenda and called for international demonstrations in its support on May Day 1890, whilst the SDF, attending the rival congress, had consistently questioned the relevance of such a demand. The election of William Morris as the British representative on the International Executive of the Second International, when the Socialist League was on the point of collapse, merely emphasised the confusion which epitomised the whole episode.

The intrigues of the International Socialist movement had only a minimal impact upon the mass of British workers, but the rising tide of labour unrest which culminated in the great dock strike of 1889 was far more significant, both for the British working class and for the SDF. The Federation had 'won its spurs' during the Bryant and May's match girls strike the previous year, the work of Herbert Burrows in particular earning the plaudits of onlookers.⁷ When Will Thorne, a member of the Canning Town branch of the SDF, took the lead in the formation of the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers early in 1889 things looked even more promising. The union won the Eight-Hour Day in the London Gasworks without resort to a strike and Thorne was overwhelmingly elected as its first General Secretary. Another SDF member, Lewis Lyons, was organising successfully amongst the clothing workers of the East End and had established a considerable reputation for his part in the 'anti-sweating' agitation.⁸

Yet these three had worked very much on their own initiative, with little organised SDF intervention, although Justice did publicise the campaigns once they were underway. The walk-out of labourers at the South-West India Dock on 12 August precipitated a chain of events which demonstrated very clearly the failure of the party leadership to recognise the significance of these labour upheavals.

The events of the dock strike have been amply documented. To echo Yvonne Kapp, 'Its immortalisation rests too secure, and in better hands, to justify an account here of this triumphant action by the most desperate, dehumanised and insecure of all workers.'⁹ The sheer self-sacrifice and unending work of many SDF members cannot be denied, whether it be Quelch on the South Side, lesser known members such as Harris of Canning Town and Thornton of Deptford, or the two members of the Battersea branch victimised for their agitation.¹⁰ But as an organisation the Federation never proclaimed whole-hearted support for the strike. 'Petty gains are of little value',¹¹ said one editorial, and 'A strike is only guerilla warfare for very small results',¹² advised another. Such comments could perhaps have been glossed over given the work of individual party members, but once the strike was ended Justice launched its attack. 'Was such a ridiculous mockery of success worth a month's starvation and misery?' demanded the paper as H. W. Hobart lectured the dockers on the 'Errors of the Strike.'¹³ The flood of dockers and other workers into the Dock, Wharf and Riverside Labourers' Union should have been answer enough, but the SDF failed to differentiate between this 'new unionism'

and the old. In so doing it abdicated political leadership and reverted to an essentially barren propagandism. 'Better we shall never see the fruit of our labour than...reap it at the cost of principle. Again we proclaim the Class War, raise the Red Flag on high and shout for the Social Revolution',¹⁴ was Justice's negative comment on the dock strike. It attacked Burns and Mann for refusing to allow the Red Flag at the dock gates and on demonstrations which, as Engels later remarked, 'would have ruined the whole movement and, instead of gaining over the dockers, would have driven them back into the arms of the Capitalists.'¹⁵ Engels recognised that from the experience of struggle workers could develop Socialist ideas, and he pointed out that they had chosen openly declared Socialists as their leaders. 'Undoubtedly the East Enders have committed colossal blunders', he said, but 'so have their predecessors, and so do the doctrinaire Socialists who pooh-pooh them.'¹⁶ An even sadder indictment of Hyndman and the party leadership is that the Radical press also assessed the importance of this mass movement far more accurately than they. As Reynolds' Newspaper commented:

Every movement that tends to the increase of the knowledge of the masses as to their rights is a democratic agency that works upwards to the ideal.

This great strike is one of those movements, and the most important that has been seen in the generation.¹⁷

The dock strike completed the alienation of Burns from the SDF and deterred Tom Mann from any further work with the party,

although he never formally resigned. The real tragedy was that the Federation had been in a position if not to influence the course of events then at least to march with them. At the beginning of the year it had been awarded the accolade of 'the most vital social movement of the day',¹⁸ and praised 'for having forced public opinion on some of the chief topics of the day.'¹⁹ Its members were bombarded with requests to assist in the organisation of the brickmakers, barmen, postmen, bakers, tramwaymen and others for, it was said, most of the credit for advances in London trade unionism was 'due in great measure to the unremitting exertions of the members of the Social Democratic Federation.'²⁰ If the Socialist propaganda had not created a mass party it had made

a the unskilled labourers of London and other places conscious of their state of degradation...the numbers of meetings conducted by Socialists which have taken place every week for the last eight or ten years...have been the real education which has led up to the demand for a more decent and comfortable style of living.²¹

Yet the SDF had achieved this position almost by default. Quelch, organising the South Side Labour Protection League,²² and Jack Williams his National Federation of Labour Unions²³ were succeeding in spite of rather than because of SDF policy. At its 1889 Conference, hard on the heels of the successful gasworkers' campaign for the Eight-Hour Day and shortly before

the dockers' epic battle, the party had adopted a nine-point programme which failed to mention trade unionism. Six executive committees were appointed to oversee every aspect of the SDF's activities, but industry was omitted. Others would take up the mantle which Hyndman and the SDF rejected.

The SDF's history in the 1880s has been examined in detail because during those years the party developed modes of thought and action which help to explain much of its later history. At the close of the decade membership was stagnant and leading figures disillusioned; the Federation seemingly justified Pelling's dismissal as 'a weedy growth'. However, a concentration on its mistakes must be tempered by some recognition of its achievements.

Throughout the 1880s the Social-Democratic Federation was an extremely small organisation, P. A. Watmough estimating an average paying membership of 580, the bulk of which was concentrated in London.²⁴ This figure is probably a conservative estimate, but in any event would give a false impression of the Federation's influence during this period.²⁵ Some branches failed to pay their dues regularly and others failed to pay at all; some deliberately underestimated their membership in an attempt to build up branch finances.²⁶ Financial membership of any political organisation is, in truth, only the tip of the iceberg in reflecting the total support for or influence of those organisations. The SDF's financial problems

were acute throughout this period and individual branches must have been hard pressed to make ends meet, hence the apparent falsification of dues by many. Moreover many of the members were attracted during the unemployed agitation, the Federation's major battle during the 1880s. Annie Besant, commenting on the Deptford branch in 1888, pointed out that the members were 'mostly of the very poor; I should say fully one half of them are men who are out of work each winter.'²⁷ Another observer, this time in Clerkenwell, remembered 'a poor lot...a sort of gathering of down and outs'.²⁸ These would not have been able to pay regular, if any, dues and many would have been transient members, enrolling during the excitement of a free speech battle or unemployed demonstration and falling away as activity died down. Such a phenomenon is common to all revolutionary organisations, indeed to all political parties, but the point is that considerable numbers of people did come into contact with the SDF and Socialist ideas. Engels later estimated that 100,000 had passed through the SDF ranks in its first decade, a not unreasonable conjecture.²⁹ A concentration on paying membership ignores the extensive periphery developed by the Federation, which attracted very large crowds to its demonstrations.

If the bulk of the membership was either transitory or peripheral the backbone of the party was of a very different character. The middle-class leadership, devoting both time and money to the cause, has often been remarked upon, but by the end of the decade a hard-core of artisan members had developed, very similar to that prominent in London and provincial

Radicalism. Many were outstanding representatives of that autodidactic tradition commented upon by MacIntyre,³⁰ men such as Harry Quelch, Tom Mann and Jack Williams. Typical of the austere approach of these members was their choice of meeting place, often a coffee bar or hired rooms. Although the SDF did not accept the view that temperance was the cure for social evil it frequently railed against the evils of alcohol and often questioned the advisability of meeting in public houses.³¹ The quality of membership was as important as the numbers recruited in these early years, for the Socialists were operating in a uniformly hostile environment:

The Socialist had no money for either organisation or ammunition; he had no Press, no approving public, and he could not meet his opponent on equal terms He was accused of advocating sex, anarchy and free love, and outraged piety gathered up its skirts when he passed. He was the Ishmael of the smug Victorian world.³²

Members were victimised and ostracised, calumniated and mocked; small wonder then that many fell by the wayside.

Yet the SDF had had high hopes of moving 'the masses'. Justice reverberated with calls to 'awaken', 'activate', 'educate' and 'inspire' them. Fired by a belief in the inevitability of Socialism, many were deeply disappointed at their failure to reach the hearts and minds of the public.

William Morris bemoaned 'The frightful ignorance and want of impressibility of the average English workman'.³³ Tom Mann was similarly discouraged:

Many would come along with the remark that "they had some concern for constitutional procedure", or they feared "society might be unhinged", or "we must give the employers a chance", or "I reckon something ought to be done but I belong to the Liberal Party". Yet many of these men would not be getting more than twenty-two shillings a week.³⁴

Repeated reactions such as these could turn despair into rage and, in the case of Harry Quelch, a near contempt for the mentality of the ordinary worker. His Literary Remains exhibit an air of gloomy antagonism towards 'the bone-headed working man' which erupted on occasions, as when he called on 'the people to come out of their bug-hutches and slums and fight for Socialism',³⁵ only to be assaulted by a member of the crowd.

Quelch took from Hyndman this tone of arrogance, which was often portrayed in Justice. The Federation appeared to preach at the workers, to exhibit an air of pessimism which was further exaggerated by Hyndman's inflexibility. Nevertheless to take this as typical of SDF attitudes is unfair. Annie Besant thought that 'none save those who worked with them knew how much of real nobility, of heroic self-sacrifice, of constant self-denial, of brotherly affection, there is among the Social-Democrats'.³⁶ Mann's efforts in Newcastle, Bolton and

London were typical of many, their lapses into despair therefore the more understandable. Had their 'heroic self-sacrifice' achieved nothing?

Pelling's view of the Social-Democratic Federation as 'a stage army' in the 1880s is representative of most historians. The economic depression and the schism in the Liberal Party had provided an opportunity for growth which it had failed to grasp. Given that revolution was not a realistic proposition during this period the party, through its own mistakes, minimised its impact. Four accusations are commonly levelled at the SDF. First, that Hyndman's leadership and idiosyncratic personal views were a hindrance to its success. Secondly, that it attempted to impose an alien creed, Marxism, on the English working-class. It is charged with being hostile to the trade unions and, finally, with exhibiting an ambiguous attitude towards politics which confused its audience. Are these arguments valid?

Hyndman's autocratic leadership of the Federation undoubtedly created discord within its ranks. Morris, Champion, Burns, Mann and others left rather than submit to what they regarded as dictatorship. But, if his anti-Semitic and jingo utterances alienated the party's internationalists, they can hardly be blamed for the SDF's failure to attract a wider membership. In the heyday of imperialism his nationalist conception of Socialism, his calls for a big navy, and his vision of England leading the way to Socialism were as likely to attract as repel would-be recruits. Robert Blatchford held similar views yet

attracted thousands of Socialists to his Clarion movement. Of far more significance was his almost proprietorial control of the party, his intolerance of debate. At a time when Socialist theory was still being formulated, when debate was essential, Hyndman narrowed the avenues open to the party. His inflexibility left dissidents with limited options but it should be noted that Morris and his supporters were in a position to overcome Hyndmanite domination at the end of 1884 but failed to grasp the opportunity. In seceding from the SDF they ensured Hyndman's pre-eminence and must therefore share any blame for the party's future direction. Morris, Bax and Eleanor Marx could have done a great deal to counteract Hyndman's attitude to the unions, his jingoistic tendencies, and they could undoubtedly have tempered the somewhat sterile nature of his Marxism.

The SDF's Marxism has long been a subject of controversy. As the pioneer Marxist organisation in Britain the Federation confronted the problems faced by all pioneers in their attempts to break new ground. There were few Marxist texts available; indeed, a list of Socialist literature for workers in Justice at the end of 1884 contained no Marx! It was, therefore, the Federation's task to interpret Marxism for the class they were aiming to reach, and Hyndman's efforts in this field were invaluable. His Historic Basis of Socialism, his collaborations with Morris, the Socialist Catechism of Joynes and the serialisations of The Communist Manifesto and Wage, Labour and Capital in Justice first brought Marx, hitherto read only by the erudite few, to a wider British audience. Furthermore,

the SDF's emphasis on the class war was not alien to a working population faced by economic depression; it was implicit in the daily struggles of men such as Ben Tillett, Tom Mann, Jack Williams and John Burns. Stanley Pierson³⁷ has argued that the Federation attempted to adapt Marxism to indigenous patterns of thought and certainly, in its early years, the party referred as often to Bronterre O'Brien as to Karl Marx. A student of Justice cannot fail to notice the distinct similarity between much of the propaganda and the ideas characteristic of revolutionary Owenism of the mid-1830s. There is the same opposition to separate action by individual trade unions as opposed to one vast amalgamation of labour. Many working-class SDF members held to Owen's ideas that workers must 'own their own factories'³⁸ rather than they be administered by officials of the community at large. And above all there is the same faith in the proximity of a sudden and inevitable revolution. As Paul Thompson has demonstrated, London Socialists, rooted in the secular materialist tradition, found far more affinity with Marxism than with the later ethical Socialism of the ILP.³⁹ The arguable failure of the Social-Democratic Federation in the 1880s cannot, therefore, be blamed on an attempt to impose 'a sour creed, imported from abroad'. What can be said is that the party's own interpretation of Marx was, in some areas, suspect.

Engels was quick to point out that the SDF 'managed to transform our theory into the rigid dogma of an orthodox sect'.⁴⁰ The writings of Marx and Engels were not intended to become a doctrine; they were a critique, providing a theory and a guide to action. Their theory was developed in response to

specific challenges and situations, and the whole point of the dialectic was that things develop in the course of conflict, during the class struggle. But, to echo Henry Collins, the SDF 'had the tendency to repeat and the reluctance to develop'.⁴¹ The very title of Joynes's Socialist Catechism suggests a body of established truth to be learned rather than a basis for further development. This pamphlet, for many British Socialists their first introduction to Marxism, had at its heart the notion of the 'iron law of wages', which Marx had long since repudiated. Critics of the SDF, however, ignore the fact that exponents of Marxism had themselves but limited access to the works of Marx. His earlier philosophical and historical works, the Grundrisse for example, were unavailable. In a sense Collins is unfair to condemn the Federation, whose problem was that its message was not getting through. It was therefore forced to repeat and sloganise. Limited to the materialist conception of history and believing that Marx guaranteed the ultimate triumph of Socialism, many justified their abstention from certain areas of working-class activity on the grounds that they were irrelevant, that history could not be rushed. In the words of Stephen Yeo,

It was a matter of "The Social Revolution and How to Prepare for it" not how to manufacture it. In that context, it was just as well to hold to one's central beliefs and aspirations religiously: there was no need to pawn them to pay for the revolution.⁴²

This was particularly true of the party's attitude to the

trade unions.

The SDF manifesto of 1884 accused the unions of class collaboration, of aiming to improve the position of the favoured few affiliated to the TUC at the expense of the masses. This was a valid accusation and the Federation, attempting to present an alternative to the two major parties, was correct to expose the elitist nature of the TUC. The party's attitude is even more understandable when one considers the nature of trade unionism in London, the SDF stronghold in the 1880s and early 1890s. Its unstable population and characteristic small-scale sweated trades made it, according to Ben Tillet, 'the ever great problem...the sphinx of Labour'. Although from 1860 through to the late 1880s London trade unionism was comparatively strong in terms of numbers compared to the rest of the country, the point was that it was dominated by the junta, the leaders of the craft unions. During periods of recession these craft unions were very often all that remained. Hyndman and other SDFers objected to their anti-political outlook, the view that trade unions as units should not take part in politics, coupled with the almost slavish adherence to Liberalism of their leaders. After 1889 the upsurge of new unionism left London much weaker in relation to the provinces, but by this time the SDF suspicion of the unions had hardened into a general belief in their uselessness. Adherence to the 'iron law of wages' led to the supposition that unions could in no way affect their level of wages under existing capitalist conditions. It followed therefore that strikes were ineffective

and pointless, 'a lowering of the flag, a departure from active propaganda and a waste of energy'.⁴³ SDF members were encouraged to explain to their fellow union members that strike pay would be better spent on Socialist propaganda. Thus, despite the initiatives of individual members, there was no organised intervention in the major struggles of 1889.

Hyndman could have learned a lesson from Engels, who was enthusiastic about such events because they were genuine workers' movements. Engels believed that the limited fight for better wages and hours would develop into a wider movement for political power. Observing the SDF's failure to comprehend this, he remarked in 1891 that

the people who, more or less, have the correct theory as to the dogmatic side of it, become a mere sect because they cannot conceive that living theory of action, of working with the working class at every possible stage of its development, otherwise than as a collection of dogmas...recited like a formula or a Catholic prayer.⁴⁴

The SDF's narrow and dogmatic interpretation of Marxism led it to withdraw from the arena most likely to yield success and lost it valuable members in the shape of Burns, Mann and Champion. It should be noted though that Quelch, Williams and other active trade unionists remained loyal to Hyndman. A concentration on the unemployed, whom even Hyndman admitted could not make a revolution, was a valuable propaganda exercise

in the short term but a tactical error which restricted the Federation to a marginal role in the Labour movement, propagandising from the outside.

A similar confusion existed in the political sphere. Preaching class war and declaring the imminence of the revolution the SDF expended a considerable amount of energy on electoral campaigns. Even as they chided the unions for fighting for improved wages and conditions the leadership advanced a programme of palliatives to be achieved through parliamentary action. The result was dissension on both left and right of the party. Yet the Federation's policy, if clearly thought out, was a viable one. A combination of palliatives and revolutionary propaganda was a practical mix and parliamentary elections were an invaluable platform for propaganda. The pure propagandists of the Socialist League were utopian in outlook. How many have to be converted before Socialism becomes a possibility? The problem was that SDF policy was not consciously thought out and inconsistency was the byword. Hyndman tended to see revolution around every corner and veered from one extreme to the other with the ebbs and flows of the movement. In their defence it must be emphasised that the early Socialists were, in a sense, working 'blind'; there were no precedents to guide them. Motivated by an almost messianic belief in the inevitability of revolution, the condition of capitalism in the mid 1880s led them to believe that the revolution was close at hand. The revolutionary hyperbole of 1886-87 and Hyndman's reiterated faith in 1889 as the year

of Socialist triumph thus become understandable. Harder to excuse are the Federation's tactical errors. The running of candidates in hopeless constituencies left the party open to ridicule, whilst the concentration of their fire upon the Liberals rather than the Tories, the instructions to members to vote Tory where there was no SDF candidate, simply antagonised most enfranchised working men. They saw advanced Radicalism as their most fertile recruiting ground,⁴⁵ yet simultaneously alienated those they hoped to attract. In regarding the defeat of Liberalism as an essential prerequisite of Socialist advance the SDF was not unique. It continued the Chartist tradition that the Whigs were the real enemies who had to be swept out of the way and both the Clarion movement and the ILP would voice similar policies.⁴⁶ The Liberal Party was seen as a fraud, blinding the workers to the realities of capitalism, whereas the Tories were open and obvious class enemies. Defeat Liberalism, went the argument, and one would then face a straight fight with the Tories, Capitalism versus Socialism. Theoretically arguable this was politically disastrous. Working with the Radicals and presenting themselves as the advanced fighters for the working class, as at the time of the free speech agitation, allowed the SDF to argue its case and expose the deficiencies of Radicalism. By attacking the Radicals the SDF simply alienated the majority of Liberal working men.

Deficient in its Marxism, inconsistent in its policies, hostile to the trade unions, the SDF failed to build mass support within the working class during the 1880s. Many of

its failures are explicable or at least understandable, but in retrospect better leadership could have made the party more influential. Hyndman has long been seen as the stumbling block to SDF progress and undoubtedly his personal characteristics alienated many. Tom Bell thought him 'a vain, egotistical old peacock',⁴⁷ but to emphasise his faults is to ignore the very valuable role he performed in these pioneering days. As Tom Mann recalled,

The tall hat, the frock coat and the long beard often drew the curious-minded, who would not have spent time listening to one in workman's attireIt was no small matter to know that in our advocacy of the principles we had learned to love, which on so many occasions brought forth stinging criticisms from the Press, Hyndman's ability to state the case comprehensively, logically and argumentatively was at our disposal, and was of very great value indeed.⁴⁸

Mann, no supporter of Hyndman's, was convinced that 'he did much valuable work at the particular time when that special work was needed',⁴⁹ whilst George Lansbury's biographer has pointed out that no one 'had the direct effect on his mind that Hyndman had'.⁵⁰ He provided the introduction to Socialism for many in the 1880s and thereafter.

Against heavy odds and in spite of its own errors the Social-Democratic Federation had established a small but durable

presence. It had formed an effective organisation in the newly settled working-class districts of London such as Battersea, Peckham and Wandsworth, and had maintained and stabilised a base in Lancashire. Its leadership of the unemployed had won the respect of many; its free speech campaigns had culminated in several important victories; it had taken the lead in pressing for free school meals. Such propaganda had brought thousands into contact with Socialist ideas, and it was no accident that many of the leading protagonists of new unionism were either members of or had passed through the SDF. If the Federation had not mobilised working-class opinion towards Socialism it had turned many minds towards a broad-based working-class movement. 'In more senses than one the early work of the Federation lies at the root of the whole Socialist expansion of the years which were to come'.⁵¹ Mistakes were inevitable, given that the movement was in its infancy, but the SDF had survived. It entered the 1890s as 'a tiny caravan of missionaries struggling through a quagmire of theoretical and practical difficulties'.⁵² These difficulties persisted and the debate over strategy continued, but during the next decade the Social-Democratic Federation emerged as a viable Socialist party, with particularly strong roots in the East End of London, in Lancashire, and in provincial centres such as Reading and Northampton. At the turn of the century, however, it was confronted with a new dilemma. The emergence of a trade-union based Labour Party posed new problems for the SDF.

NOTES.

1. Justice, 19 May 1889.
2. See Kapp, op.cit., pp.293-298.
3. Eleanor Marx to Laura Lafargue, 30 October 1888, quoted in Kapp, op.cit., p.300.
4. Engels issued 3,000 copies of a pamphlet, The International Working Men's Congress of 1889. A reply to 'Justice'.
The SDF retaliated with a manifesto, Plain Truths About the International Congress of Workers in Paris in 1889, to which Engels and Bernstein replied on 1 June.
5. Along with 15 Trades Councils, 5 Radical Clubs, the Fabian Society and a delegation from the TUC Parliamentary Committee.
6. Labour Elector, 3 August 1889, quoted in Kapp, op.cit., p.313.
7. Reynolds' Newspaper, 8 July 1889.
8. Ibid., 12 August 1888.
9. Kapp, op.cit., p.328.
10. Justice, 7 September 1889.
11. Ibid., 31 August 1889.
12. Ibid., 7 September 1889.
13. Ibid., 21 September 1889.
14. Ibid.
15. Daily Chronicle, 1 July 1893.
16. Preface to the 1892 edition of The Condition of the Working-Class in England.
17. Reynolds' Newspaper, 1 September 1889.

18. Ibid., 17 February 1889.
19. Ibid., 20 January 1889.
20. Ibid., 11 August 1889.
21. Ibid., 8 September 1889.
22. 23 branches and 2,500 members by June 1892.
23. 13 branches formed in two months.
24. P. A. Watmough, 'The Membership of the Social Democratic Federation 1885-1902', in Bulletin Number 34 of the Society For the Study of Labour History, Spring 1977, pp.35-40.
25. How, for example, does one equate Watmough's estimated London membership of 390 in 1886 with Battersea's claimed 500 members and Bermondsey's 145? Tom Mann reported a Bolton branch membership of 170 in 1888 and Salford claimed 50 members yet Watmough gives a total Lancashire membership of only 40. On the one occasion the SDF issued its own figures, for 1886-7, its total dues of £34 8s 11d represented 689 members. Quite obviously many members did not pay subscriptions.
26. Watmough does not include branches that collapsed in any one year nor does he always include new ones; thus Manchester is absent from his figures for 1887 and Rochdale for 1888.
27. The Link, 24 March 1888, quoted in P. Thompson, op.cit., p.115.
28. F. W. Galton, MSS autobiography, quoted in P. Thompson, op.cit., p.115.

29. At the time of the February riots in 1886 the Daily Chronicle said that the circulation of Justice was 3-4,000 and that Hyndman could muster some 10,000 supporters in London. See the Daily Chronicle, 15 February 1886. Yet on Watmough's figures the SDF had only 484 fee-paying members and 21 branches that year.
30. MacIntyre, A Proletarian Science.
31. See, for example, Justice, 1 November 1884.
32. Snell, op.cit., p.136.
33. 'William Morris's Socialist Diary', op.cit., 26 January 1887.
34. T. Mann, From Single Tax to Syndicalism, p.9.
35. Quoted in G. Lansbury, My Life, (1928), p.111.
36. A. Besant, An Autobiography, (1893), p.302.
37. Pierson, Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism, p.xi.
38. John Burns in Justice, 12 September 1885.
39. P. Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour.
40. Engels to F. A. Sorge, 10 November 1894, quoted in H. Collins, 'The Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation' in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), Essays in Labour History 1886-1923, (1971), p.48.
41. Collins, op.cit., p.51.
42. Yeo, 'A New Life', op.cit., p.23.
43. Justice, 6 September 1884.
44. Engels to Laura Lafargue, 4 May 1891, quoted in Kapp, op.cit., p.475.

45. See, for example, E. Aveling, Socialism and Radicalism, (1885).
46. See, for example, The Clarion, 12 March 1892, 9 July 1892.
47. T. Bell, Pioneering Days, (1941), p.38.
48. Mann, Memoirs, pp.26-27.
49. Ibid.
50. R. Postgate, The Life of George Lansbury, (1951), p.33.
51. G. Elton, England Arise, (1931), p.100.
52. Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, p.86.

PART II.

REFORM OR REVOLUTION?

INTRODUCTION.

The emergence of the SDF in the 1880s had coincided with the bleakest years of the depression in the second half of the nineteenth century. This depression, allied to chronic overcrowding in London and harsh winters, seemed to fulfil the Socialist prophecy that the final crisis of capitalism was imminent and it fuelled the apocalyptic bent of the SDF in the mid 1880s. Consequently the Federation operated in a manner which approximated most closely to the conventional stereotype. It developed a strategy of campaigns outside the sphere of trade unionism, based on the unemployed, and an apparently enthusiastic response strengthened still further the SDF's shortened timescale of revolution. However, as Gareth Stedman Jones has pointed out,¹ the crowds attending Socialist rallies were not industrial workers but the casual poor and they were motivated not by Socialism but by need; their violence was fuelled not by revolutionary theory but by desperation. The SDF faced fundamental problems in building a Socialist movement upon such a base, whilst a city like London posed severe problems in itself.² Furthermore the Federation's very limited penetration of the provinces narrowed its perspective considerably.

As the upheavals of these years subsided the SDF began to address itself to the question of strategy. The years 1888 and 1889 were ones of debate within the party, a debate coloured by personal animosities but nonetheless genuinely democratic, for the SDF was far from being the rigid, monolithic organisation

often depicted. Burrows argued for municipal politics, Hyndman for parliamentary candidatures, and Tom Mann proposed an alternative, trade union orientated policy. The issues were argued out in the branches and in the columns of Justice, only for the SDF to find itself overtaken by the events of 1889 on the London docks. Consequently the Federation had to respond to a new situation.

The success of the dock strike gave a great impetus to trade unionism throughout the country. Many of today's unions were founded between 1888 and 1892, as were many Trades Councils, and 'Even the oldest and most autocratic Unions were affected by the revivalist fervour of the new leaders'.³ The SDF could no longer ignore the unions. Indeed, many of the characteristics of new unionism stemmed from the party's militants who were active in the movement. During the 1890s the relationship between the Social-Democratic Federation and the trade unions was a hotly contested issue, and three distinct groupings emerged. The anti-union proponents argued that trade unions were a distraction from Socialist agitation and that they signified an implicit recognition of capitalism. Although they gradually lost support within the party prior to 1897 their abusive tone tended to dominate the pages of Justice and thus give a somewhat distorted picture of SDF policy during this vital decade. Moreover, they had the support of Hyndman, the most visible presence in the Federation. Events towards the end of the decade saw a resurgence of their influence, with far-reaching implications for the SDF. A 'centrist' group

emerged around the influential figures of Quelch, Burrows and Hobart, active union members themselves and also Socialists well versed in the writings of Marx and Engels. Quelch, as editor of Justice, did his utmost to counter the anti-union or 'impossibilist' attack. He argued that trade unions contained at least something of the principles of collectivism and were useful educational agencies. However, at best, the unions made capitalism a little more tolerable, and the task of the SDF was to raise the battle to a political level. This 'orthodox-Marxist' position, as it has been termed,⁴ would eventually triumph as the Federation's leadership sought desperately to maintain party unity in the early years of the twentieth century. The supporters of trade unions took up their analysis where the 'orthodox-Marxists' left off. They argued that the unions should be the first focus of attention for Socialists because they embodied many Socialist principles in their daily activities. The SDF should not merely wait for the revolution but work actively both to promote it and achieve reforms. Supporters of this strategy were particularly influential in Lancashire, where traditional working-class Conservatism gave them a political space in which to operate and where their experiences on the industrial front taught them the value of close links with the unions.

These divisions within the Social-Democratic Federation were not rigid, nor clearly defined. The Quelch group moved closer to the pro-unionists in the mid 1890s, leading the SDF

to its first official pronouncement on trade union policy in 1897 and into the Labour Representation Committee in 1900. Yet union defeats, both on the industrial front and in the courts, led to a resurgence of anti-union sentiment, to the possibility of a schism in the party and thus to a reversal of policy. Leading SDFers cannot be categorised simplistically into these tendencies. Hyndman was consistently opposed to trade unions yet he faced heavy and sustained criticism from others in the anti-union camp, the so-called 'impossibilists'. Theodore Rothstein was a leading left-wing opponent of Hyndman, but he strongly supported union activity and was implacably hostile to the 'impossibilists'. Together with Ernest Belfort Bax he strove to create a Marxist synthesis of industrial and political activity which would expand SDF influence within the Labour movement. Nonetheless, the identification of these three tendencies within the Federation does much to explain its activities and policies in this period, and it emphasises the fact that the SDF was a democratic party, a decentralised organisation with considerable branch autonomy. This counter-veils the prevailing stereotype, but it could be argued that the resulting absence of a coherent and consistent policy was a source of confusion both to members and to those whom the SDF hoped to influence.

The explosion of trade union membership in the early 1890s lent tremendous weight to the movement for working-class independence in politics. The strikes of this period demonstrated to many Liberal workers that Liberal employers

were no better than any other. These same employers prevented local Liberal caucuses from adopting working-class parliamentary candidates. Such experiences led to an alliance of Socialist ideas with a mass movement, and a consequent mushrooming of political activity, particularly in the North of England. As a result the SDF found itself with a competitor on the left when, in 1893, the Independent Labour Party was formed, presenting an alternative 'ethical' Socialism to the Marxism of the SDF.

It would be a mistake to view the ILP as a direct rival to the SDF, particularly in the early years. The ILP was more 'an extension of the Socialist movement into new geographical areas',⁵ areas which the SDF had been unable to reach for financial and organisational reasons. Where the two did co-exist it is easy to forget, in the light of later events, that the SDF was in fact instrumental in the formation of many local Independent Labour Party branches before the ILP adopted a national organisation. The vitriolic disputes between the leaders of the two parties disguise the considerable co-operation which existed at local level, extending to dual membership and joint organisation. The tendency to view the SDF as sectarian ignores the fact that it was the ILP leadership, responding to electoral failure in 1895 and the TUC's blunting of Socialist influence in the same year, which moved towards the politics of pragmatism and the progressive alliance and away from a joint Socialist policy. A consequent rank and file revolt led to the development of a serious alternative to ILP policy, the 'one

Socialist Party' or Socialist Unity option. This was given considerable momentum by the propaganda of Robert Blatchford and the Clarion and led to Socialist unity talks, which broke down largely because Hardie and Glasier of the ILP feared that fusion with the SDF would jeopardise their chances of a trade union alliance. Thus the question of Socialist unity overlaps that of the attitude of the SDF towards trade unionism, particularly as the strongest support within the SDF for both trade unions and Socialist unity came from Lancashire, an area where both the Federation and the ILP were strong.

The 'Labourist' tradition has pushed the Socialist unity campaigns to the margins of history in the same way that it has relegated the SDF to the status of a sect. Yet the history of the Labour movement in London and Lancashire suggests that the ILP was not necessarily the 'natural' vehicle for British Socialism, whilst the votes cast for Harry Quelch at Dewsbury in 1902 and for Edward Hartley at East Bradford in 1906, both standing in very unfavourable circumstances, showed that the SDF could poll well outside its strongholds. The Dewsbury branch of the SDF highlights the vagaries of Socialist history. It was one of the few branches to establish a durable presence in Yorkshire, and its career suggests that if the Federation had been able to propagandise in the county prior to the formation of the ILP it might well have been more successful. The Dewsbury by-election campaign in 1902 encapsulates the SDF experience in the late 1890s and early twentieth century. It demonstrated both a deep-seated enthusiasm for Socialism as

opposed to the Labour Alliance and the possibilities of a Socialist unity strategy. Conversely it was illustrative of the sharpening tension within the movement, for Quelch's candidature divided the labour forces both locally and nationally and widened the gulf between the SDF and the ILP. The by-election highlighted the dilemma of the SDF in trying to define its role outside the LRC and exacerbated divisions within the party between its reformist and revolutionary wings. The mid and late 1890s were in many ways the high-water mark of the SDF's history but events at a national level, the emergence of the Labour Representation Committee, signalled its ultimate decline.

NOTES.

1. G. Stedman Jones, Outcast London, (1984) .
2. Ibid., p.346.
3. S. and B. Webb, The History of Trade Unionism, (1912 edition), p.393.
4. V. Rabinovitch, 'British Marxist Socialism and Trade Unionism: The Attitudes, Experiences and Activities of the Social-Democratic Federation 1884-1901', Unpublished D.Phil. Sussex, 1977. Rabinovitch uses the term 'orthodox-Marxist' to describe the group around Quelch, and I am indebted to his work for clarifying some of my own ideas in this area.
5. Ibid., p.22.

CHAPTER VI.

THE S.D.F. AND THE TRADE UNIONS.

The Social-Democratic Federation, although an avowedly Marxist party, placed considerable emphasis on its line of descent from English thought, partly to counteract what Hyndman and others saw as the undue influence of the German party on the International Socialist movement. Ernest Jones, Robert Owen,¹ and Bronterre O'Brien were all singled out as mentors by the SDF, and R.P.B. Frost pointed out that the term 'social-democrat' was first used in the Poor Man's Guardian of 1834, some thirty years before its German usage.² This attempt to nurture a specifically British identity was given further weight by the scarcity of English translations of Marxist texts. When Socialism Made Plain was published by the Federation none of the works of Marx or Engels was then available in English. Repeated appeals to Engels proved fruitless and eventually the SDF published Wage, Labour and Capital, the first ten chapters of Capital, and the Poverty of Philosophy, without his authorisation. Thrown back on their own resources the SDF published some 40 pamphlets prior to 1901, allied to theoretical articles in Justice and, of course, the longer works of Hyndman, Bax and others. Thus a distinctive, if somewhat idiosyncratic, Social-Democratic ideological framework was to emerge. The SDF did not simply purvey a stereotyped Marxist dogma; it adopted Marxism as a tool of analysis. On the question of trade unions, however, the tool was somewhat limited. This fact,

allied to the desire of Hyndman and others not to appear slavish devotees of Marx, meant a confused and somewhat hesitant approach to the trade unions. As late as 1906 Harry Quelch was emphasising the Federation's debt to 'the glorious old physical-force Chartists' who, he said, had recognised the dangers of 'mere organisation as a wage-slave'. Thus, 'in this matter of trade unionism and its probable results to the wage-slaves as a class, the Chartists saw much further than the great German theorist'.³

The Marxist texts available to the Federation had, in fact, little to say about trade unions, and Marx and Engels had a distinctly pessimistic view of their role in the development of Socialism. Wage Labour and Capital, which was translated by J. L. Joynes and serialised in Justice in late 1884, concentrated on the wage minimum which insisted that wages equalled the basic cost of existence and production and seldom rose above it. Trade unions could not have a substantial economic or social influence on the activities of capital nor on the extent to which capital determined the level of living standards. This analysis, slightly modified, remained remarkably consistent through the years. The first volume of Capital was partially translated in Today, beginning in October 1885, with the authorised English edition appearing in 1887. Marx's most sophisticated economic text stated very clearly that unions could exercise at best a marginal influence on wages and working conditions, although it did allow scope for positive union activity in certain specific situations such as periods

of rapid economic expansion when labour was in demand. However, the overall message was unmistakeable: only the contradictions inherent in the capitalist system, aided by political action, could lead to Socialism. This analysis provided the European Marxists of the Second International with a common set of assumptions about the increasing immiseration of the working-class, the inexorable growth of capital, and the consequent weaknesses of trade unions. It was not modified by the Communist Manifesto, serialised in Justice in 1888, although the Manifesto did provide some positive insights. Unions were seen as building organisation and solidarity, but the real gains were to be made on the political not the economic front.

These three works help to explain the attitude of the SDF towards trade unionism in the 1880s, and they provided a basic framework of SDF analysis for most of its history, but it is during its first decade that the Federation came closest to the anti-union stereotype. The party was formed at a time of apparent union weakness and apathy, when the old-style unions with their emphasis on friendly benefits and negotiation still held sway, and when their leaders were strongly anti-Socialist. It was formed in and centred on London, where the unions were relatively weak. SDF strategy therefore concentrated on campaigns in other spheres and, prior to 1888, the unions were discussed only in general terms and usually critically. Tom Mann was, of course, one exception and his activities in Lancashire, where Trade Unions were relatively strong, enabled SDF expansion. But generally unions were seen

as an aristocracy of labour, an obstacle to Socialism, whilst strikes were self-defeating, playing into the hands of the capitalists.⁴ Yet even in this early period there was no consistent official line. Whilst Hyndman could argue that all unions 'have ceased to be advantageous in their present shape',⁵ other members urged workers to join unions and W. Jones, of the London Trades Council, suggested that 'Trade Unions are good in every possible way'.⁶ A generally critical tone did prevail though, as the SDF attacked the slow growth of union membership and their failure to organise the unskilled. In the heady months of 1886 and 1887 trade unions seemed irrelevant to the struggle for Socialism. The French, German and American parties reached much the same conclusion, although of course the unions in those countries operated under far severer restrictions than those in Britain. Even Engels commented that 'They form an aristocracy among the working class; they have succeeded in enforcing for themselves a relatively comfortable position, and they accept it as final'.⁷ Convinced of the imminence of revolution, aware of Marx's strictures upon trade unionism, the SDF assigned little importance to the industrial front in the mid 1880s. Emphasising as they did their line of descent from earlier English Socialists they would perhaps have echoed Ernest Jones' comment that 'All trade unions are lamentable fallacies, whether they embrace 1,000 or 1,000,000. All co-operative efforts are a waste, misdirection of time, means and energy under our present governmental system.'⁸

Given such views it is hardly surprising that the SDF's antipathy was reciprocated by union leaders such as Howell and Burt. They regarded the SDF as mischievous agitators, fundamentally opposed to trade unionism, and acting with Tory backing, a view which the 'Tory Gold' scandal did little to dispel. By early 1888 however, as the unemployed agitation subsided due to state repression and an improving economy, the SDF was forced to reconsider its strategy. Both traditional political methods and the industrial organisation of the workers began to receive closer attention. James Blackwell commented that 'There is no reason why Trade Unionists, who have shown the way in organisation, should not be the vanguard in settling the unemployed question and establishing Social-Democracy.'⁹

Tom Mann was firmly orientated towards organisation at the workplace, and with other SDFers who were active in their unions he vigorously promoted the Eight-Hour Day. He formed an Eight-Hour League which was exceedingly influential amongst London unions. The Eight-Hour Day had been one of the palliatives advanced in Socialism Made Plain and Hyndman had been responsible for pushing it as a means of improving workers' health and giving them increased leisure time for education. However, he and his supporters doubted the value of existing unions in promoting such a measure and objected to Mann's concentration on a single issue, which they saw as a diversion from the primary task of promoting Socialism.¹⁰ 'Why bother about catching a sprat where the same expenditure of time will hook a mackerel?'¹¹ asked A. P. Hazell of the London

Compositors. Nonetheless, as the debate continued the pro-unionists were gaining strength, encouraged by growing union support for the Eight Hours Movement. As Reynolds' Newspaper commented, 'Successes such as these in so short a time ought to stimulate the Social-Democratic Federation to further experiments in the field of practical politics'.¹²

Certainly the pages of Justice showed an increasing concern with labour matters. The paper was enlarged to eight pages at the end of 1887 and incorporated a full page of labour notes edited by H. W. Hobart. In the provinces SDFers were active on the Birmingham Trades Council and the Newcastle Trades Council, and Tom Mann was sent north to organise around the miners' strike.¹³ Yet the uncertainty remained. Hobart was undoubtedly a militant trade unionist but he had little time for minor gains through protracted disputes. Hyndman was still firmly opposed to trade unions and, when he replaced Quelch as editor of Justice in the summer of 1889, the paper reverted to its earlier sniping tone:

...if one half the money spent...for strikes were used consciously to further the cause of Socialism the gains...would be infinitely greater and more permanent. A rise of wages can, under existing circumstances, only be temporary.¹⁴

Hyndman's pre-eminence in the SDF meant that most trade unionists would have accepted his views as party orthodoxy. They would

not have noticed the internal debate continuing in Justice and the branches, a debate given renewed stimulus by the dock strike.

During the strike the Federation was supportive, and individual members extremely active, but the strike's conclusion unleashed a flood of criticism. Much of this was of a personal nature. Many members deeply resented the prominence given to Burns, Mann, and Champion when the East London branches had spent four years propagandising the dockland. According to Annie Besant, Burns and others were 'gathering the fruits of the hard work done at the dockgates in the...early winter mornings by Burrows, Williams and other members.'¹⁵ The leaders of the strike disclaimed their connection with Socialism even though they were reaping the benefits of years of Socialist agitation. Their actions seemed to prove that a concentration on trade unions meant an abandonment of Socialism. Consequently there were frequent references to these 'traitors' and Jim Connell was moved to write The Red Flag, symbolising both the hopes and the fears of the early British Socialists. These personal animosities blinded the SDF to the importance of the strike,¹⁶ but they could not ignore the wave of new unionism which succeeded it. Whilst their Marxist texts gave no clear answers as to the role of trade unions, the growth of their membership at least provided a mass audience for the propagandising of Socialist ideas. Thus a detailed debate ensued in the 1890s, leading to the emergence of three tendencies within the party.

Hyndman's anti-trade union viewpoint was straightforward. The result of the dockers' victory would simply be cost-inflation; wage rises would only lead to rent and other price increases. Even if the new unions managed to gain shorter working hours this would lead to the introduction of new machinery and the employment of fewer workers. Hyndman's supporters also stressed the unskilled unions' vulnerability to blacklegging, a key weapon in the employers' armoury. In other words any gains would be illusory and short-lived. If that was the case then a concentration on trade union work was self-defeating and a distraction from the main task of Socialist propaganda. It was 'a lowering of the flag, a departure from active propaganda, and a waste of energy' argued Thomas Fitzpatrick,¹⁷ and Hazell thought that comrades who poured their energies into new unionism 'spent the greater part of their energies in vain' and would do better to form an SDF branch.¹⁸ Hyndman summed up this argument by suggesting that 'the amount of energy and self-sacrifice expended upon even a successful strike would bring about ten times the result if devoted to political action.'¹⁹

The ultimate thrust of this tendency was to point out that unions were, de facto, 'a recognition of capitalism and the right to exploit'. After all, most strikes were settled by arbitration and who were the arbitrators? 'Why, simply capitalists.'²⁰

The centrist or 'orthodox Marxist' viewpoint approximated to what Marx and Engels actually said about trade

unions. Its leading proponents, Quelch, Burrows and Hobart, were all active in the new union movement. Burrows, immediately after the dock strike, commented that 'The new trade unionism is Socialist in its origin and it is based on that which, to the older trade unionists, had about it an ominous foreign sound, the "Solidarity of labour"'.²¹ He equated the movement with 'a blind Samson, just recovering his strength.'²² Theirs was a cautious optimism and they saw limitations to the value of the new unions. These doubts were best expressed by Harry Quelch. He resumed the editorship of Justice in 1892, the termination of his stewardship of the South Side Labour Protection League reflecting his view that ultimately Socialist agitation must take precedence over union activity. In a pamphlet entitled Trade Unionism, Co-operation and Social-Democracy Quelch outlined the basic position of this group. Trade unionism, he argued, was apart from Socialism yet it contained 'something of the principle of collectivism'. It was the duty of every SDF member to belong to a union because they were useful educational bodies.

It is chiefly...as an educational influence, as a means for sufficiently improving his position, as to make the workman discontented with that position, that trade-unionism is useful from a Social-Democratic point of view.²³

Quelch further admitted that the unions could achieve limited gains when trade was good, although he warned that for every step forward there was one step back. Ultimately though the

justification for unions was that they were 'a means for securing a weapon', for they represented the workers as a political force. What they had to do was to use the power which organisation gave them to seize control of the political machinery. Thus the political struggle superseded the economic, for in the same pamphlet Quelch pointed out that during a strike 'the want and suffering, the ruin and desolation are all on one side'. He confronted the same paradox as Marx and Engels: how could a class suffering economic defeat develop the consciousness necessary for political victory? Both Burrows and Hobart drew a clear distinction between union reformism and Socialism. Hobart, however, stressed the need for militancy at all times, for reforms could be won by aggressive tactics. The working class, he argued, could learn their lesson only through direct struggle. The Quelchites were groping their way towards a synthesis of political and industrial struggle, education and direct action, which, if adopted as a consistent policy, could have made the SDF a more potent force.

The pro-union grouping within the SDF went one step further. They argued that the unions embodied Socialist principles in their day-to-day activities and should therefore be the prime focus of attention, because of their central role in the working-class struggle. Bax saw in the New Unions 'the Socialist party in the becoming, the element which is being absorbed by Socialism'. He also pointed to the fate of utopian Socialism, where 'The working class movement as such went on without any obvious connection with the contemporary

theoretical speculations and utopian experiments'.²⁴ His underlying rationale was that unions could achieve significant reforms, and to simply wait and propagandise for the revolution was ridiculous. Another supporter of this tendency, Margaretta Hicks, put it thus: 'It is worse than waiting for Heaven. Unless we do...something now we shall all be dead and buried long before any improvement is made....The Revolution will come when we have worked for it.'²⁵

The dividing line between the 'orthodox Marxists' and the pro-unionists was a very thin one and the distinction was often blurred. Essentially the supporters of Quelch feared that a concentration on trade union work would relegate the propagation of Socialism to a secondary role. Their position tended to waver with the ebb and flow of the industrial struggle, and they thus became a pivotal force within the party as it struggled towards a trade union policy during the 1890s.

At the SDF Conference in 1890 H. W. Lee, the party secretary, complained that Socialism had been 'driven into the background', and the following year he warned against Social Democrats 'in any way forsaking the movement for trade unionism'.²⁶ Another member emphasised that whilst the unions should be permeated with Socialism the SDF should not 'sacrifice to mere trade organisation that energy and enthusiasm which ought to be devoted to the spread of Social Democracy'.²⁷ These reservations seemed justified by the economic downturn of the early 1890s and the decline in union membership.²⁸ The

SDF resumed its unemployed agitation but, significantly, it did not attempt to bypass the trade union movement this time, arguing that success depended on co-operation between those in and out of work. The party also intervened in the miners' strike in the North East in 1892. Unfortunately, its failure to develop a coherent policy was again demonstrated by its continued insistence on the uselessness of strikes and the need for a social revolution. Meanwhile the anti-unionists were becoming increasingly vocal, asserting the need for a politically led Socialist revolution in the face of the growth of employers' federations and organised blacklegging. There was a heated clash at the SDF's 1894 Conference, where Hyndman fought against inviting the trade unions to an International Congress to be held in London in 1896. Their presence, he said, 'would not advance the cause of International Socialism'.²⁹ Hunter Watts retaliated by urging that 'they should meet the organised workers and discuss with them what methods could be adopted to take hold of the instruments of industry'.³⁰ A compromise resolution suggested a separate Socialist Congress prior to the Workers' Congress, though this never materialised.

The debate within the SDF was a tribute to the party's internal democracy and a demonstration of the increasing maturity of its political thought. Its failure to reach a decision, however, led to confusion and friction with other labour bodies, and the high profile of the anti-union camp damaged the party's credibility. Quelch clearly recognised this and considerably softened the tone of Justice after he

resumed his position as editor.³¹ Nonetheless, as the debate became more heated, party unity was threatened. This threat was averted because in 1896 and 1897 the Quelch group moved closer to the pro-union tendency, thus leaving the anti-union element isolated. The failure of the unemployed agitation to achieve significant results was partly responsible for this shift in position, as was the economic revival which began in 1896 and created a more favourable climate for union activity. A further factor was the burgeoning strength of the Federation in the provinces, particularly in Lancashire where many members were active union militants and where the unions were relatively strong. They provided a significant challenge to the influence of the 'old guard', centred in London. Finally the 1896 International Congress, held in London, exerted a considerable impact on SDF opinion. Wilhelm Liebknecht and others praised British trade unions and the Congress adopted a resolution asserting the need for strong unions as a complementary weapon to legislative action. The resolution did not make it clear whether industrial or political action should have priority, nor was it binding, but certainly the opponents of trade unions within the SDF found themselves on the defensive. The 'orthodox Marxists' now adopted a more activist approach to the unions, with Quelch again taking the lead. There should, he said, be 'friendly helpfulness' between the SDF and the trade union movement, for whilst 'it may be difficult to work with it...it is impossible to do anything without it'.³² Trade union members were obviously the best elements of the working class, who had taken the first step on the way to Socialism.

Therefore, 'If there is not a field of action for Social-Democracy in trade unionism what is there outside?'³³ Although Quelch did qualify his views somewhat by insisting that electoral alliances between unions and Socialist parties were not practical, he had now developed a far more positive attitude than that expressed in his pamphlet of 1890, and it provided the basis for the compromise reached at the Federation's Annual Conference of 1897.

Conference advised members to join trade unions by 46 votes to 2, and to 'work harmoniously with trade unionists and cooperators as representing organisations having for their object the improvement of the status of the workers'. This very general endorsement was followed by a reaffirmation of the ultimate Socialist goal, 'the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange', which reassured the anti-unionists that the SDF was not abandoning its Socialist faith. Finally, the resolution laid claim to the political support of all trade unionists, implying that only the SDF could truly serve the interests of the working class. Thus a mid-path was steered between conflicting viewpoints. 'This flexible statement enabled an umbrella of unity to be maintained, covering the differences of emphasis which were still voiced in SDF ranks'.³⁴

Scepticism about the value of trade unions as a basis for Socialist advance was not restricted to the SDF. Such diverse

members of the Socialist movement as Blatchford, James Ramsay MacDonald and Glasier were all agreed on the limitations of trade union 'sectionalism'. Similarly, distrust of the strike weapon was near universal, 'part of the mainstream of British Socialist thought'.³⁵ This tradition was almost obliterated, however, by the subsequent union domination of the Labour Party, whereas the SDF's reputation for being anti-trade union has persisted. Hobsbawm accuses the Federation of being 'flatly hostile to the trade unions';³⁶ Collins condemns it for its 'peculiar position...in relation to trade unions'.³⁷ Alex Callinicos, in a sweeping critique, dismisses the SDF for its 'propagandism' which, he argues, 'runs contrary to the Marxist tradition'.³⁸ Such criticism is merited, but the critics of the SDF err in assuming that the party had a coherent policy towards the unions, for in truth it had none. Its initial hostility to trade unionism is easily explicable in terms of the ideological ancestry of British Socialism, the character of trade unionism when the Federation was founded, and the writings of Marx then available to its members. The depressed economic conditions of the 1880s seemed to justify a concentration on unemployed agitation rather than strike action, and the increased opportunities opened up by local government reform were attractive to a party which took seriously the possibility of municipal power independent of the capitalist state. The range of attitudes developed in the 1880s thus prevented the SDF from seizing the opportunities offered by the

upsurge of New Unionism. It was indeed 'tepid and equivocal',³⁹ towards the Dock strike, it failed to see that limited fights such as this could develop into a wider movement for political power. Callinicos's criticism of the SDF as 'propagandist', of accepting the separation of politics and economics and prioritising the propagation of Socialist ideas independent of any mass struggle, would therefore be justified at this stage.

What the critics do not recognise is that these events sparked a long and sustained debate within the party about the nature and role of trade unions and about the Federation's relationship to them. Far from being a centralised, monolithic organisation the SDF was highly democratic and its branches had considerable autonomy. Hyndman, contrary to popular perception, was unable to impose his will as he wished. During the 1890s his anti-union views, which clearly merit Callinicos's critique, lost ground within the party. The tragedy was that on this question internal democracy prevented a satisfactory resolution to the debate. In the absence of a clear policy trade union and labour leaders simply assumed that Hyndman's views were congruent with those of the party. This misapprehension, coupled with the continuing failure of the SDF to resolve its internal debate, led ultimately to the Federation's disastrous decision to withdraw from the Labour Representation Committee. But in 1897 this was far from being the inevitable conclusion. The SDF had moved towards a more flexible strategic approach, a synthesis rather than separation of industrial

and political organisation. This year saw also the culmination of a lengthy struggle to unite the Social-Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party into one Socialist Party.

The ILP had pursued the policy of an alliance with the unions since its electoral defeat of 1895; with the SDF now approaching the unions more positively Socialist Unity would have given the British Socialist movement significant influence within the wider Labour arena.

NOTES.

1. See also Chapter 5.
2. Justice, 19 April 1884.
3. Ibid., 7 April 1906.
4. The SDF owed as much to Owen as to Marx with its insistence on the uselessness of sectional strikes and the need for a consolidation of labour and a general strike.
5. Justice, 18 June 1887.
6. Ibid., 11 September 1886.
7. Commonweal, 1 March 1885, quoted in Rabonivitch, op.cit., p.96.
8. Notes to the People, March 1852.
9. Justice, 13 August 1887.
10. See also Chapter IV for Mann's clashes with Hyndman on this issue.
11. Justice, 8 January 1887.
12. Reynolds' Newspaper, 27 January 1889.
13. See Chapter IV.
14. Justice, 28 December 1889.
15. Ibid., 7 September 1889.
16. See Chapter V for a more detailed discussion of the dock strike.
17. Justice, 3 May 1890.
18. Ibid., 7 March 1891.
19. Ibid., 4 July 1891.
20. Ibid., 3 May 1890.
21. Ibid., 25 January 1890.

22. Ibid.
23. Trade Unionism, Co-operation and Social-Democracy, (1890), p.10.
24. Justice, 30 May 1891.
25. Ibid., 6 April 1895.
26. Ibid., 8 August 1891.
27. Ibid., 5 September 1891.
28. The number of trade unionists represented at the TUC fell from 1,593,000 in 1890 to 721,000 in 1893, and G.D.H. Cole estimated a decline in total union membership of some 450,000.
29. SDF Annual Conference Report 1894, pp.28-31.
30. Ibid.
31. See, for example, Justice, 19 August 1893 and 4 May 1895.
32. Justice, 22 May 1897.
33. Ibid.
34. Rabinovitch, op.cit., p.191.
35. Ibid., p.248.
36. Hobsbawm, 'Hyndman and the SDF', op.cit., p.233.
37. Collins, 'The Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation', op.cit., p.66.
38. A. Callinicos, 'Politics or Abstract Propagandism?', in International Socialism, Volume 11, Winter 1981, p.111.
39. Collins, 'The Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation', op.cit., p.63.

CHAPTER VII.
SOCIALIST UNITY.

William Morris was responsible for the first attempt to unite the Socialist forces in Britain. He had withdrawn from the Socialist League shortly before its demise and thereafter pondered the best means of advance for the movement. Rejecting his earlier extreme anti-parliamentarianism, Morris was now prepared to accept the value of the fight for limited gains. To that end he dreamed 'of a real Socialist Party at once united and free',¹ an objective to which he devoted much of the rest of his life. In December 1892, Morris's Hammersmith Socialist Society approached the two effective Socialist organisations in London, the Fabians and the SDF, with a view to forming a Socialist Federation. A committee was formed, consisting of five delegates from each body, and on the 1st of May 1893 it issued the Manifesto of the Joint Committee of Socialist Bodies. This manifesto declared that 'all who can fairly be called Socialists are agreed in their main principles of thought and action', and stated that their aim was the communal ownership of the means of production and exchange. This projected alliance was short-lived, for it had collapsed by the end of July. The Fabians had been deterred by a statement of revolutionary principles far more explicit than they had expected. For its part the SDF welcomed the manifesto's statement of principles but felt that what was needed also was political discipline based on a reorganisation of Socialist forces, and

there was 'only one Socialist organisation in these islands which practises that discipline and that is the Social-Democratic Federation'.² Consequently members of the other bodies should join the SDF. However, a more fundamental weakness of these unity negotiations was that they had ignored the existence of the Independent Labour Party, formed in January 1893 and already a potent force in the North of England.

The ILP had emerged from the industrial unrest at the turn of the decade, an unrest which had not resulted in any accession of strength to the Socialist forces. A number of independent Socialists and Labour leaders had come to the conclusion that before the working class could be mobilised into a mass Socialist party it would be necessary to organise them for independent Labour politics. This viewpoint was reinforced by the increasing anachronism of the Liberal Party acting as the vehicle for working-class demands. Not only did the Party seem unable to adapt its arguments to the rapidly changing economic conditions of the 1880s and 1890s, but its refusal to countenance working-class parliamentary candidates disappointed and frustrated the aspirations and expectations of many activists. Additionally, the Liberal split of 1886, leading to two decades of Conservative dominance, led to recurrent debates about the future of the Liberal Party and to dreams of political realignment. The SDF's repeated insistence upon the imminent demise of Liberalism, which would leave the field clear for a straight fight between Capital and Labour, was

paralleled in Blatchford's Clarion and in much early ILP thinking. The exemplar of this demand for an independent Labour political strategy was James Keir Hardie. At the Trade Union Congress of 1887 he had protested strongly against Labour representatives identifying themselves with the Liberals. In 1888 he had stood as independent Labour candidate in the Mid-Lanark by-election, and a few months later Hardie was instrumental in the formation of the Scottish Labour Party.

Hardie's views found support in another stronghold of independent Labour politics, the West Riding of Yorkshire, where the Liberal Party continued to dominate. Factors such as Home Rule and ethnic and religious divisions, which caused support to switch to the Conservatives in other parts of the country, were absent here. Consequently leading Liberals could afford to be totally unsympathetic both to Labour candidates and to Labour demands in an area where trade unions were weak. This factor, allied to a tradition of working-class radicalism, provided the point of departure for the ILP in Yorkshire. The catalyst was the Manningham Mills strike of 1890-91 in Bradford, whilst events in Halifax, where two labour propagandists were sacked by Liberal employers, did little to inspire confidence in the Liberal Party. Similarly, working-class and middle-class Radicals in the Colne Valley had little faith in a Liberal Association with James, later Sir James, Kitson as its candidate. A further impetus to the movement came from the mushrooming development of Trades Councils, most of recent creation and therefore with no Liberal legacy.

It is revealing that in West Yorkshire the title of 'Labour Union' was adopted by the new bodies in Bradford, Keighley, Halifax and elsewhere. As David Howell has commented, they were formed not on the basis of political principle but to safeguard the interests of one particular section of the community.³ Their platforms could therefore have been accommodated within progressive Liberalism. That they were not was due partly to the unbending attitudes of local Liberal caucuses and partly to the Socialist attachments of local leaders like Tom Maguire, Fred Jowett and, to a lesser extent, Ben Turner. Nonetheless, says Howell,

Many of the critics carried much of the Liberal ethos with them; their additions were typically a special emphasis on labour questions, some sort of commitment to Socialism, and perhaps most crucial of all, a strong attachment to an independent political organisation.⁴

Fuelled by the propaganda of Robert Blatchford in The Clarion,⁵ buoyed by the success of Hardie and Burns in the general election of 1892, these trends crystallised in January 1893 when, at a conference in Bradford, the various Labour organisations came together to form the ILP.

The SDF had been hostile to the idea of an independent labour party from the outset. In June of the preceding year Quelch had stressed that all trade unions could do what the miners had done i.e. organise to elect their own M.P.s, but

this simply meant absorption into the ranks of the Liberals or Tories. The need was for a revolutionary party, not one to make the domination of capital more tolerable.⁶ Any Labour Party, he argued, would be simply a 'fortuitous concourse of heterogeneous political atoms...a bear garden.'⁷ The SDF Conference of that year proclaimed an attitude of 'benevolent neutrality' to any such party, but shortly before the ILP's inaugural conference Quelch renewed his attack. Any real independent Labour party, he said, should be a Social-Democratic Party and he warned that, 'He who is not with us is against us.'⁸ Harry Lee scathingly condemned the conference: the ILP, had been formed on a negative basis with no definite principles; Socialism was not even mentioned in the title of the party. 'We know that the attempt will fail',⁹ said Lee. Hyndman actively opposed the admission of ILP representatives to the Joint Committee and thereby ensured the failure of this initial attempt at Socialist unity. Attempts were made to damn the ILP by association with the Engels 'clique', which was anathema to the 'old guard' of the SDF.

I have always regarded the formation of the Independent Labour Party as another of the many attempts which have from time to time been made to head back the genuine Social-Democratic movement in Great Britain,

wrote Tattler.¹⁰ Equally dismissive was the accusation that the ILP was simply 'a recrudescence of the Labour Electoral

Associations and Leagues...which have since died a natural death or have become mere appendages of the Liberal Party.'¹¹

The attitudes and pronouncements of the SDF leadership, however, did not reflect what was happening at the grassroots. A concentration on the editorial comment in Justice or the opinions of Hyndman and Quelch produces a distorted picture of SDF activity, as it does concerning the party's relationship with the trade unions. Nowhere is this more evident than in Lancashire, where SDF branches had developed considerable autonomy. Here they played an influential role in the formation of the ILP in several areas. Jeffrey Hill has argued that 'The idea of a labour alliance may well have had its earliest manifestation in Salford during the early nineties.'¹² The Salford branch of the SDF had been prominent in the upsurge of 'new unionism' in the area and was thus in contact with other labour groups. Goaded by the refusal of the Liberal Union to consider Trades Council candidates for municipal seats these groups coalesced to form the Salford Labour Electoral Association in the summer of 1891. This unity was short-lived, as personal and ideological disputes rent the Association. W. K. Hall, the SDF candidate for South Salford, played down his Marxism and stood essentially as an advanced Liberal in an attempt at reconciliation, but his defeat signalled the demise of the Association. The Manchester ILP was formed shortly afterwards in what was clearly an attempt to restore Labour and Socialist unity. As Hill has emphasised, 'one of the most active sources of support for the creation of an ILP

in this area, and one which historians have tended to overlook, was the Social Democratic Federation.'¹³ At the inaugural conference at St. James's Hall in May 1892 five SDFers were prominent on the platform and the Federation remained closely allied to the ILP, at times 'so close as to make any distinctions between them almost imperceptible.'¹⁴ Similar initiatives could be seen elsewhere, at Accrington, Nelson and Blackburn for example, and the six SDF delegates at the ILP's founding conference in Bradford were all from Lancashire. It is hardly surprising therefore that the first attempts at a national amalgamation of the two parties came from Lancashire.

The period after 1893 was one of growth for the Socialist movement. Justice reported a doubling of bona fide paying members and increased circulation figures, and the SDF exceeded two thousand members in 1894. The ILP grew rapidly in its first two years, but, as Rabinovitch has suggested, the two parties tended to flourish in separate geographical areas. Whereas the SDF was strong in London the ILP could make little headway there; conversely one third of ILP strength was centred in Yorkshire, Bradford alone claiming two thousand members in 1893. But the SDF could not report a single branch in Yorkshire. Lancashire was the major exception to this trend, providing the SDF with its main provincial base but also allowing the ILP to sink strong roots. It exhibited two features characteristic of the movement at this time. Dual membership of the two bodies was common but there were many Socialists who remained unattached, swelling the numbers at

demonstrations but refusing to join one of the existing parties. They were often avid readers of The Clarion, adherents of what Stephen Yeo has referred to as 'The Religion of Socialism.' In 1894 Robert Blatchford wrote excitedly that 'Five years ago there were not 500 socialists in Manchester. Now there must be 30,000.'¹⁵ If only these 'unattached' could be enrolled into the movement then Socialist unity seemed a distinct possibility.

The Second Annual Conference of the ILP, in 1894, debated a Lancashire resolution in favour of amalgamation with the SDF. This proposal originated both from the fact that some ILP branches in the county were struggling to hold their own against strong SDF opposition and from a genuine enthusiasm for unity. The resolution was defeated largely because the SDF posed no significant threat to the ILP elsewhere, especially in its stronghold of West Yorkshire, and therefore party activists had little understanding of the Lancashire position. They were wary too of identifying themselves so closely with a Socialist position at this early stage in the party's history. Robert Blatchford was undismayed; encouraged by the success of his Clarion movement and the phenomenal sales of his penny pamphlet, Merrie England, he was convinced that thousands of unattached Socialists were ready to join a unified party. In July 1894 he launched a Socialist unity campaign, based on the premise that all Socialists agreed on root-principles and should therefore 'recognise each other's right to liberty in all matters of detail, banding ourselves together under the broad principle

of Socialism.'¹⁶ The response disappointed him. The leadership of the SDF could not agree that it shared the same basic principles as the ILP, which Quelch saw as 'a sort of half-way house' for those who might otherwise have joined a real Socialist party.¹⁷ If the ILP members were really Socialists, he said, 'then it was nothing short of treason to their principles to start another organisation.'¹⁸ With SDF membership increasing there seemed little need for unity. Keir Hardie was equally emphatic in rejecting the idea and optimistic about the ILP future:

As an organisation for uniting all the forces into a solid fighting phalanx the I.L.P. fits the bill
.... Two years hence, and every section of the workers will be united, marching to victory under the banner of the I.L.P.¹⁹

If the leaders of the two parties were intransigent Blatchford's appeal did touch a chord with some of the rank and file. ILP support, unsurprisingly, was strongest in Lancashire with the Darlington, Crewe, Droylsden and Middleton branches voting in favour of unity in December 1894. Similarly SDF support was strongest where the ILP held sway, the newly-formed Leeds branch of the Federation declaring 'That it is desirable to form a National Socialist Party'.²⁰ The ILP in Yorkshire, however, was almost uniformly hostile. In October 1894 the party's Yorkshire Divisional Council rejected a move to change its name to the 'National Socialist Party', fearful

of jeopardising its links with the trade unions, and the vote was reinforced by the NAC in December of that year. Blatchford attempted to circumvent this opposition by appealing directly to the membership of both parties, urging SDFers to join the ILP and vice-versa. In this way, he said, 'old prejudices will die out and the ideas of the two organisations will become assimilated'.²¹ The response was limited and by the beginning of 1895 the campaign appeared to have subsided. Even Tom Mann, more sympathetic than most, wrote that:

no one Socialist platform has yet proved to be sufficiently broad to admit of all sorts and conditions of Socialists using the same platform for the advocacy of their respective views and methods.

and he advised Blatchford 'to let the matter lie in abeyance'.²²

The failure of this attempt to unite the Socialist forces can be explained easily enough. As the pioneering Socialist organisation the SDF was jealous of its position; whilst members in Lancashire and elsewhere were prepared to assist the growth of independent labour politics as a step on the way to Socialism they saw no need for another Socialist organisation. Indeed many doubted the Socialist credentials of the ILP and questioned the ethical/religious base of its philosophy. As the SDF appeared to be flourishing, reporting 40 new branches in 1895 including six in the hitherto barren

area of Yorkshire,²³ there seemed little reason to flirt with what was at best a quasi-Socialist party. For its part the ILP was euphoric at its apparently rapid progress, with its sights set firmly on the coming general election after four exceptionally good by-election results. Hardie, pursuing his campaign for trade-union support, saw Socialist unity as a hindrance and the SDF's Marxism as a positive drawback. The pre-eminent position of the Yorkshire region in ILP councils meant that unity with the SDF was never seriously considered at that time. Yet it was the ILP which initiated the next attempt at rapprochement.

1895 was in many ways a crucial year for the British Socialist movement. All 29 ILP candidates were defeated at the general election, although with hindsight the results were very reasonable for a first attempt, some 40,000 votes being polled. Nevertheless the party's confidence was severely shaken and membership fell from 35,000 to 20,000 in the following year. Two somewhat contradictory results ensued. The party leadership became more convinced than ever of the necessity for pragmatic politics, of the need to form a progressive alliance to capture parliamentary seats, and this could only be achieved by pushing the ultimate Socialist goal further into the future. Events at the Trades Union Congress in 1895 reinforced this belief. The Socialists had scored increasing successes there since 1890, culminating in 1894 with the passing of a resolution in favour of the nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Such gains

had been largely illusory, for the Parliamentary Committee remained dominated by Liberals and they now retaliated, introducing the block vote and excluding from the Congress Trades Council delegates and all those not working at their trade or who were not permanent union officials. The Socialist influence was blunted and thus the ILP became even more ready to compromise with progressive trade-union opinion. The leadership now viewed the establishment of Socialism on a much longer timescale which, as David Howell has pointed out, rendered them 'subject to conservative influences'.²⁴ Many of the rank and file, on the other hand, began to question the whole direction of this policy. They reverted to the emphasis upon 'making Socialists', which was essentially the SDF rationale. The campaign to unite the ILP and SDF was revived, striking a chord even in West Yorkshire, where the Keighley ILP voted in favour of one Socialist party on 6 February 1896.

After 1895 there were, if one excludes the possibility of a return to the Liberal fold, two distinct lines of advance open to the British Socialist movement. The debate between the protagonists of the Labour Alliance and those of Socialist unity would, in one way or another, dominate the Socialist milieu until the outbreak of the First World War. For the moment the advocates of one Socialist party were in the ascendancy in the ILP, many of them anxious to assert rank and file democracy in the face of what they saw as a move towards centralisation and bureaucracy within the party. Hardie, sensitive to the changing mood, prepared to compromise and he

suggested an annual conference of all Socialist organisations, trade unions and co-operative bodies. The Easter Conference of 1896 instructed the NAC to issue invitations to just such a conference. Initial SDF reaction was hostile; it was felt that the ILP was only talking about some form of unity because of its own internal difficulties. The SDF, still preoccupied with internal debates about strategy, was not prepared to co-operate with non-Socialist bodies at this stage and noted that the ILP rule forbidding all intrigue with 'Capitalist political factions' had been rescinded, thus making unity 'much more improbable for the moment'.²⁵ James Leatham pointed out that the Federation was doing well and was at last free from debt.²⁶ Thus, at its August Conference, the SDF rejected the idea of one Socialist party by 75 votes to 13.

Events soon disposed the SDF to change its position. Its financial solvency was short-lived, largely due to expenditure on the Southampton by-election; rank and file pressure for unity mounted, as letters to Justice testify, and the increasing prominence of the pro-union tendency within the Federation led to a less hostile view of ILP strategy. The early months of 1897 saw a remarkable transformation in SDF attitudes. Quelch remarked of the ILP that 'At present, in principle and aim, it is almost at one with the S.D.F.', and he congratulated it upon its 'distinct tendency to a more definite Socialist position and programme.'²⁷ Five SDF delegates attended an informal conference of the two parties on 29 July, where Keir Hardie proposed the resolution that

it is desirable in the interests of the Socialist movement that the S.D.F. and I.L.P. be united in one organisation provided it is found that there is no question of principle to keep them apart.²⁸

A joint committee of arrangement was established pending a decision on points of differences such as the new name of the party, and a further committee was appointed for the purpose of arbitration on electoral disputes. Finally, the executives of the two bodies agreed that a referendum of the joint membership be held. In what was, admittedly, a low poll the members voted 5,158 to 886 in favour of fusion. Yet that decision was never implemented and the campaign for Socialist unity was halted in its tracks by the refusal of the ILP Conference to ratify the decision.

The reasons for the breakdown are complex, but clearly the ILP leadership was largely to blame. Whilst Hyndman and Quelch may have been lukewarm over the matter, leading one member to comment that 'if leaders of the S.D.F. are in earnest by all means let the official organ express it',²⁹ Hardie and Glasier were positively antagonistic. Immediately after the vote Hardie waded into the attack in the ILP News.

It may be that there is something in the methods of propaganda, if not the principle of the S.D.F., that not only render it somewhat antipathetic to our members, but out of touch and harmony with the feelings and ideals of the mass of the people....It might

be, therefore, that the introduction of its spirit and methods of attack would check rather than help forward our movement.³⁰

His vision of Socialism was radically different to that of the SDF. 'They protested', he said,

against the economic side of Socialism being pressed to the front. The reforms they called Socialist reforms were but the outward expression of the inner principle. What was Socialism then? It was brotherhood, fraternity, love thy neighbour as thyself, peace on earth, goodwill towards men, and glory to God in the highest.³¹

Hardie therefore urged, in view of the small number of members voting, that the matter should be thoroughly discussed at the ILP Annual Conference and meanwhile he and Glasier campaigned vigorously for an alternative strategy, that of federation. At the Birmingham Conference the NAC argued that differences between the two parties were such that fusion would simply lead to 'harassing and paralysing internal strife',³² and Hardie accused the SDF of seeking to absorb the ILP. However it was Bruce Glasier, with a masterly piece of rhetoric, who swayed the Conference to the NAC's position. The kernel of his case was that

the ways of the S.D.F. are not our ways. If I may say so, the ways of the S.D.F. are more doctrinaire, more Calvinistic, more aggressively sectarian than

the I.L.P. The S.D.F. has failed to touch the heart of the people. Its strange disregard of the religions, morals and aesthetic sentiments of the people is an overwhelming defect.³³

This savage attack was an almost classical statement of later Labour orthodoxy with regards to the Marxist tradition, yet it bore little resemblance to the truth. If the SDF had failed 'to touch the heart of the people' then so had the ILP! The Federation had, in fact, no position on religion or morality, which it regarded as a matter of individual choice. The Federation's Calvinism, if such existed, was more than matched by the religious enthusiasms of Snowden and Hardie, whilst its relative success in London and Lancashire proved the lie to any charges of sectarianism. Nonetheless the combined weight of Hardie and Glasier persuaded Conference to ballot the members on the options of fusion or federation, with the proviso that a three-fourths majority was required if fusion was to take place. Moreover the question was loaded, the members being asked to vote either for federation or for 'dissolution of the I.L.P. and fusion with the S.D.F.', once more suggesting the idea of absorption.

Participation in the ballot was again low, 2,397 votes being cast for federation and 1,695 for fusion. Not surprisingly Hardie accepted this and ILP policy now became that of federation. Quelch was furious. 'Can it be', he asked,

that some of the leaders of the I.L.P. calculated upon the presumed disinclination of the S.D.F. to

amalgamate, and were terribly disappointed to find that the S.D.F. were quite ready to act in a conciliatory and statesmanlike spirit?³⁴

This view obviously found favour with some ILPers. 'It seems to me a most ridiculous proceeding', wrote one, 'to submit a question to a vote of the members, and then, when it is found that the vote does not coincide with the "secret wishes of the chiefs", to override it altogether'.³⁵ Why had the ILP leadership acted in this way?

After the 1895 general election Hardie's prestige and influence had waned, whilst that of Blatchford had increased. The whole style and tone of Blatchford and his Clarion was in sharp contrast to the more sober and unadventurous Labour Leader of Hardie, and Blatchford's support for Socialist unity clashed sharply with Hardie's appeal to trade-union sympathies. Support for Hardie's policy appeared to be in the balance, and thus his somewhat vague resolution in favour of unity at the informal Conference of 1897 can be interpreted as a sop to the Blatchford supporters within the ILP. Meanwhile changes on the ILP Council were strengthening his position. The direct link with 'New Unionism' was severed as Tom Mann and Pete Curran resigned to devote their energies to union organisation. They were replaced by a new type of Council member, full-time propagandists and journalists such as Snowden, Glasier and Ramsay MacDonald. Although there were sometimes quite sharp political differences between these newcomers and Hardie³⁶ they posed no real challenge

to his authority. After the ILP's 1896 Conference the federal structure of the party had been abolished to nullify the fact that Socialist unity forces had gained control of a number of the county federations. As a consequence of these developments Hardie now felt more secure and able to postpone the idea of fusion. In a speech to the Thornhill Lees ILP he argued that he had changed his mind because 'he was afraid there might be internal strife if the two bodies came together',³⁷ but in truth he had probably opposed the idea all along. As Henry Pelling has commented,

Following Hardie's lead...the I.L.P. Council regarded the whole question...in the light of the much more important problem of how to secure the assistance of the trade unions and co-operative societies in a joint movement for independent labour representation. Fusion with the S.D.F., it was thought, would prejudice the solution of this problem.³⁸

The argument about absorption by the SDF was essentially a red herring; after all the ILP had three times as many members and no details of the fusion process had been worked out. Of more significance was the quite phenomenal influence exercised by the ILP in West Yorkshire on the movement nationally. Over one-quarter of the paying members came from the West Riding and half of these from Bradford and Halifax. Here opposition to fusion was strong, understandably, for there was little or no

SDF opposition.³⁹ Both Bradford and Halifax ILP branches had strong links with the trade union movement and had already started down the road Hardie was advocating. Thus, as early as 1896, the Bradford Labour Echo had argued that

The time has not come for the thorough fusion of forces which the creation of such a party would demand....The formation of such a party before the time was ripe for it would bring nothing but mischief.⁴⁰

And there the matter rested. John Penny, the ILP secretary, wrote several letters to Lee of the SDF urging discussions on the question of federation but the SDF would have none of it:

Federation is for those who, being divided on points of principle, desire to combine for purposes on which they are agreed. Fusion is for those who, agreeing in principle and in tactics, desire to act together as one great army of Socialists.⁴¹

The ILP undoubtedly lost members as a result of the affair. The Morley branch seceded, the Dewsbury branches of the ILP and SDF fused, and the Bristol SDF and ILP amalgamated to form a Socialist Council. Alec Grey of the Watford branch summed up the feelings of many when he attacked the NAC for 'dishonesty and self-seeking', for demonstrating 'such insincerity on so important a matter'.⁴² But the protests soon died away and Hardie had his way. The ILP leaders had decided that the two parties were not agreed 'in principle and in tactics', that

Socialist unity would alienate the trade unions. Yet the collapse of the unity talks more or less coincided with the success of the pro-union tendency within the SDF. As a result the federation which the SDF had rejected became a reality in 1900 with the formation of the Labour Representation Committee. Relations between the two parties within the LRC, however, remained as strained as ever. The breakdown of Socialist unity talks in the 1890s meant that the possibility of a British Socialist movement, integrating the moral concerns of the ILP with the scientific Marxism of the SDF, was lost.

NOTES.

1. E. P. Thompson, op.cit., p.602.
2. Justice, 1 July 1893.
3. D. Howell, British Workers and the Independent Labour Party 1888-1906, (1983), p.179.
4. Ibid., p.9.
5. The Clarion was founded in December 1891.
6. Justice, 4 June 1892.
7. Ibid., 9 July 1892.
8. Ibid., 14 January 1893.
9. Ibid., 21 January 1893.
10. Ibid., 1 April 1893.
11. Ibid., 30 December 1893.
12. J. Hill, 'Social-Democracy and the Labour Movement: the Social Democratic Federation in Lancashire', The Bulletin of the North-West Labour History Society, 8, 1982, p.46.
14. Ibid., p.108.
15. Yeo, 'The Religion of Socialism', op.cit., p.7.
16. Justice, 25 August 1894.
17. Ibid., 8 September 1894.
18. Ibid., 18 August 1894.
19. Labour Leader, 6 October 1894.
20. Justice, 6 October 1894.
21. Clarion, 22 December 1894.
22. Ibid., 26 January 1895.
23. Armley, Leeds, Sheffield, Bingley, New Wortley, Low Bentham.
A seventh Yorkshire branch, Bradford, was formed soon after the Annual Conference.

24. Howell, British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, p.128.
25. Justice, 18 April 1896.
26. This was due largely to the work of the Twentieth Century Press, formed in 1891.
27. Justice, 17 April 1897.
28. H. W. Lee, The Social-Democratic Party and Socialist Unity, (1910), p.4.
29. Justice, 1 January 1898.
30. ILP News, August 1897.
31. Justice, 6 June 1896.
32. ILP Annual Conference Report, 1898, p.8.
33. Ibid., pp.27-28.
34. Justice, 7 May 1898.
35. Ibid., 25 June 1898.
36. MacDonald, for example, favoured a progressive alliance of Liberal and Labour at this time.
37. Justice, 18 February 1899.
38. Pelling, op.cit., p.178.
39. The SDF branch in Bradford had, at most, 28 members and it collapsed in 1898. Halifax had no active branch.
40. Labour Echo, 11 April 1896.
41. Justice, 24 September 1898.
42. Alec Grey to John Penny, ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Correspondence, 99/50.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LABOUR REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE.

Apart from its brief 'insurrectionary' phase in the mid-1880s the Social-Democratic Federation had always taken seriously the political process. It had emerged in a political system where the legitimacy and credibility of electoral politics was clearly established, where repression of the Bismarckian type was unknown, and it genuinely believed both in Parliament and in the possibility of using it to win social reforms under capitalism. The inclusion of these reforms, or 'palliatives', in the party programme was one of the reasons for the defection of Morris and others in 1884. Their arguments were that such reforms were a mirage because the ruling class would refuse them or, if they were achieved, they were undesirable because capitalism would thereby be made more acceptable to the workers. This was never the SDF viewpoint. A list of 'stepping stones' to Socialism had been included in Socialism Made Plain and the list was incorporated in the SDF programme, alongside a series of democratic reforms such as adult suffrage and payment of M.P.s which would enable Socialists to take control of Parliament. These 'palliatives' were justified for three reasons. Better working and living conditions would 'raise the physical, moral and mental status of the working class' and 'better fit them for the struggle for their emancipation'.¹ They would hasten that emancipation by shifting the balance between private and public sector to the benefit of the latter. Thirdly, as most workers were at subsistence level, taxation came from surplus

value. Any social reforms financed by such taxation were therefore a way of redistributing real incomes.

Such views followed the tradition of Marx, who considered a peaceful revolution in England a distinct possibility. They were also extended into the municipal arena, where the increased powers of elected school boards and local authorities after 1888 gave the SDF an opportunity to exert pressure for 'palliatives' such as school meals with some chance of success. The more generous municipal franchise, and the cumulative system of voting for School Boards, provided openings for the Federation which parliamentary contests did not. Hyndman's pamphlet, A Commune For London, argued the case for municipalisation,² although there were dissenting voices within the party and arguments as to whether emphasis should be given to municipal or parliamentary politics. The dangers of a concentration on electioneering were also realised, Dan Irving reminding members that 'The Socialist representative must not cease to be an agitator because he has left the street corner for the board room.'³ A lack of success at the polls during the 1890s led to some disillusionment and a tendency to revert to propagandism but generally the SDF line remained constant. As Harry Quelch argued, 'the conquest of political power as a means to economic emancipation is the watchword of the international Social-Democracy.'⁴ He had accepted that 'it is impossible to continually march men up a hill simply to march them down again' and he now favoured 'Steady, determined, persistent organised effort, directed as well at the local

bodies as at Parliament'.⁵ Electoral failures were blamed on SDF organisation rather than SDF policy. Thus Hyndman, temporarily resigning from the Executive in 1901, accused the party of being 'wholly destitute of political aptitude.' Constituencies were worked upon to a certain point, he said, 'and then no steps whatever are taken to secure permanent advantages for revolutionary Social-Democracy from the time, trouble and money expended on them.... The canvassing, which is an indispensable preliminary to success, is persistently neglected'.⁶

There were undoubtedly weaknesses in the SDF's electoral organisation, although many, if not most, of these were attributable to lack of finance and members. One can also question the theoretical soundness of Hyndman's view of the State as 'the organised form of the community, to intervene in order to protect, for the national benefit, the lives and health of the workers...[and] to mitigate the class war'.⁷ Nonetheless, viewed in that way the conquest of Parliament seemed an obviously attractive route to Socialism. As John Tamlyn of the Burnley branch put it,

We are Parliamentarians. If individualism has used Parliament to break up and spoil the community Socialists, starting with another conception of society, may use Parliament to bind it up again and reinstate the people in their rights....The bad or good is not in the Parliament, but in the people who use it.⁸

The SDF had, therefore, a dual strategy. Its task was to use education as a means of conquering political power, to make Socialists; political campaigns served as a vehicle for propaganda and thus education, leading to a take over of the political institutions of the State. The question was, what could be done until this process produced sufficient Socialist voters?

The SDF election manifestoes for both the 1892 and 1895 general elections called upon the workers to abstain from voting where there was no genuine Socialist candidate. However, such revolutionary 'purism' provided no obvious gains for the SDF.⁹ Consequently the latter years of the decade saw a heated debate on the question of electoral tactics. The International Congress resolution of 1896, calling for political independence and equal hostility to all bourgeois parties, was welcomed by the Federation. Yet there was also a growing conviction that the Liberal Party was close to extinction and an unrealistic expectation that if its demise could somehow be hastened, 'If the Liberal Party were out of the way, we could soon make short work of the Tory Party'.¹⁰ Moreover, three-cornered parliamentary contests were proving futile and expensive for the SDF. A growing body of opinion within the party advocated voting Tory in order to smash the Liberal Party, leaving the way clear for a straight fight between capital and labour. After all, hadn't Marx and Engels predicted the disappearance of the Liberal Party? Quelch voiced a further argument, common in ILP circles too.

By posing in many instances as more than half a Socialist, the Liberal often gains support from people whose sympathies are really with us, and thereby does much to retard our movement. If, in addition to this, the Liberals persist in excluding us from all representation and using their professed sympathy with our views to that end, our policy is clear, and that is everywhere to vote against them.¹¹

He proposed a resolution to that effect at the Federation's Annual Conference in 1898, but it met with considerable opposition. Many members agreed with Bernstein, who had accused the SDF of acting as a 'door-opener' for the Tories and of sacrificing workers' immediate interests for a far-off utopia.¹² E. Morton of Sheffield and John Moore of Rochdale urged an electoral deal with the Liberals as the best way forward. Consequently, to preserve unity, a Dan Irving amendment was adopted, allowing the Executive to choose a policy according to the needs of the moment.¹³ Such a compromise satisfied neither side and the debate continued. Effectively the SDF was left with no policy, and prior to the 1899 Conference the Executive urged a definite decision and asked branches to mandate their delegates. By 51 votes to 31 a line of opposition to the Liberals was carried, not as a matter of principle but as one of tactics, 'to overcome the obstacle in the shape of the Liberal Party, which bars our progress'.¹⁴ Yet even this did not still the controversy; one writer protested

that if the Tories were elected the likelihood of war would be increased and working-class jingoism would result.¹⁵ Prominent members such as Andreas Scheu and J. B. Askew voiced similar discontent. Twelve months later party policy was once more reversed, much to Quelch's dismay, and abstention was urged on working-class voters where there was no Socialist or advanced Radical candidate.¹⁶ In truth the longed-for collapse of the Liberal Party had come no closer, for reasons which Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie have pinpointed.

It was too decentralised to be captured, too fragmented for a decisive split, too conflicted to offer any hope of unity in the foreseeable future. Yet it was still strong enough to survive as the only practicable alternative to the Tories. It sprawled across British politics, unable to get on or get out of the way.¹⁷

This confusion over electoral policy, coupled with the manifest failure of the SDF to achieve successes of its own, made the idea of an independent Labour party more appealing. Voting for Labour candidates seemed a more attractive proposition than abstaining or voting Tory and the party's more positive attitude to trade unions, as enunciated at its 1897 Conference, pointed in the same direction. Similarly the increasing influence of the Lancashire branches and the lessons of the Labour party on West Ham Council pulled the Federation towards such a policy. As the nineteenth century drew to a close

the self-evident decline of the Socialist movement from its peak in the mid-1890s was demonstrated by what Harry Snell called a reversal to 'aimless enthusiasm'.¹⁸ There was, says Stephen Yeo, 'A felt sense of failure, of being out of touch and unable to embrace the majority of the working class'.¹⁹ Participation in a Socialist and Trade Union alliance might solve that dilemma. Thus the Executive of the Social-Democratic Federation decided to participate in the conference of February 1900 which realised Keir Hardie's ambitions and led to the formation of the Labour Representation Committee.

The events of the conference were foreshadowed by the presence of 19 SDF delegates at its Scottish counterpart, the inaugural gathering of the Scottish Workers' Parliamentary Committee, in January. Here the SDF amendment in favour of 'the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange' was defeated by what one correspondent termed the 'Burgess/Hardie axis'.²⁰ George Yates of the Leith branch felt that 'Once is enough in the history of the S.D.F. in Scotland',²¹ but he and another SDFer took their places on the executive of the new body. In spite of the disappointments of the Scottish conference the SDF executive looked forward to participation in the Labour Representation Committee, sure that 'whatever may be immediately agreed upon Socialism must ultimately be the gainer'. Whilst immediate results might not be forthcoming it would provide a forum for Socialist views and would at least 'be of material service to the working-class movement as a whole'.²²

The formation of the Labour Representation Committee meant that an independent 'labour' party had finally emerged and, seemingly, the cause of Socialist unity had also been advanced, for both the ILP and SDF affiliated to the new body. In relation to their numbers the Socialist parties wielded considerable influence, having five out of twelve seats on the Executive²³ and the probability of support from Socialists among the union representatives. Yet the divisions within their ranks loomed as large as ever and indeed were exacerbated by events at the conference. James MacDonald's resolution calling for a recognition of the class war and the adoption of a Socialist objective was defeated by 59 votes to 35, with the ILP delegates voting against on the grounds that such a resolution at this early stage would alienate the unions. The SDF was furious, attacking the ILP for 'that display of treachery to which we have, unfortunately, by this time become accustomed', and commenting

that the delegates of an avowed Socialist organisation...should deliberately and boastfully repudiate the principles they were presumably sent to support is as incomprehensible as it is deplorable.²⁴

The SDF was further upset by what it regarded as the duplicity of the ILP over the appointment of James Ramsay MacDonald as secretary of the LRC, accusing them of deliberately confusing the delegates to the detriment of the Federation's candidate James MacDonald.²⁵ There is little

evidence to support this claim but an acrimonious exchange of letters followed and it was obvious that the SDF and ILP were now further apart than ever.

At this stage it was the SDF's attitude towards the trade unions which was of more vital importance, and the Federation's initial response to the LRC had been favourable:

All that the Conference has to concern itself with is the best means of securing representation of the working class in the House of Commons, independent of the Capitalist parties....this in itself is a recognition of the class struggle.²⁶

Such an attitude was in marked contrast to earlier SDF strictures and clearly signalled that the policy laid down at the 1897 Conference still held. If maintained it would undoubtedly have extended the party's influence within the wider working-class movement, in the short term at least. But at their Annual Conference in August 1901, less than eighteen months after the formation of the LRC, the SDF delegates voted 54-14 in favour of secession. Harry Quelch spoke vehemently for this course of action reasoning, somewhat tortuously, that as the bulk of the unions had not yet affiliated to the Committee it would be a mistake to antagonise them. H. W. Lee was more honest when he wrote later that 'We were being committed to the support of men and measures with whom and which we did not agree'.²⁷ Lee, Hyndman and the majority of the 'Old Guard' of the SDF came to regret the decision to withdraw from the

Labour Representation Committee. Few Labour historians have dissented from Lee's view 'that the decision was a sad mistake', and they have accepted his conclusion that

All the propaganda that we did afterwards, all the influence we were able to bring to bear in a Socialist direction, would have been very much greater indeed had we carried it on and exercised it as an integral part of the L.R.C., and not as an outside body at which many supporters of Independent Labour Representation looked a trifle askance because of our withdrawal from the L.R.C.²⁸

The SDF's decision was a fundamental error, but criticism of the party must be tempered by an awareness of the context in which the decision was made and the pressures confronting these Socialist activists of the early twentieth century. Lee's views were voiced when the Labour Party had become the main vehicle of working-class aspirations, when he himself had moved politically to the right. They reflected much changed circumstances. In 1901 options were still open, or so it seemed to the SDFers. Trade unions had not rallied to the LRC in any great numbers. Of its two M.P.s, Keir Hardie and Richard Bell of the Railway Servants, Bell was a Liberal on all questions except those related to his union. His views were indistinguishable from those of the eight 'Lib-Labs' in the House and lent little credence to the LRC's claim to independence. The failure to adopt a Socialist basis meant that the Labour Representation Committee seemed indistinguish-

able from earlier attempts at Labour electoral associations. Even more important at this stage were internal developments within the Social-Democratic Federation. The decision to withdraw from the LRC reflected a further eruption of the 'reform versus revolution' debate which had been waged inside the party since its formation, and the most significant factor influencing the vote was the spectre of schism raised by the so-called 'impossibilist' revolt.

The revolt within the SDF was a reflection of a wider international controversy over the Socialist attitude to war and the question of whether or not Socialism would be achieved by constitutional reform or by violent revolution. This latter issue came to a head at the Congress of the Second International in September 1900, where delegates fiercely debated the propriety of Millerand and two other French Socialists joining the French government. Karl Kautsky eventually proposed a resolution which condemned, in general terms, Socialist participation in capitalist governments but which argued that it might be justified in exceptional circumstances. The British delegation, with one dissentient, supported this resolution and it was subsequently passed.²⁹ George Yates, of the Leith branch of the SDF, was the dissenting voice. Yates, a prominent Scottish critic of SDF policy, sided with the left opposition at the Congress and returned to Scotland determined to continue the struggle against reformism. He found a ready response in certain Scottish branches and later in London, for dissatisfaction with the leadership and policy of the SDF was widespread.

One bone of contention was the Federation's response to the Boer War.³⁰ Another was the decision to ask members to vote Tory rather than Liberal in 1899. A further source of friction stemmed from the domination of the party by the 'Old Guard' around Hyndman. The executive was middle-aged and middle class; it had been in control of the Federation ever since its foundation and it also controlled the party organ Justice.³¹ The dominance of Hyndman and his supporters irked many of the younger, working-class members³² and, for the first time since the days of the Socialist League, the leadership was confronted by an increasingly vocal opposition. It was an opposition which had developed a distinctive political line, which regarded itself as a serious Marxist current in a party which had lapsed into reformism. They objected to what they saw as attempts at illusory short cuts to Socialism, the discarding of principles in the hope of immediate gain. Thus the electoral forays, the attempted alliance with the unions in the LRC, the unity talks with the ILP, a distinctly anti-Marxist body. Yates and others, scorning this compromising attitude, were increasingly attracted to the ideas of Daniel de Leon and the American Socialist Labour Party. Links between Scottish SDFers and the American Socialists had been established in 1898 when J. P. Douall of the Edinburgh branch had visited the United States and returned with some SLP literature. Some members were impressed by de Leon's exposition of Socialism, by his advocacy of industrial unionism as opposed to electoral struggle. His criticism of the Socialist parties

of the Second International as the 'labour lieutenants of capitalism', failing to challenge the existing power structure, seemed a percipient view of the SDF's role in the LRC. Thus, by the end of 1900, 'the American S.L.P. with its weekly and daily People and De Leon's pamphlets had exercised considerable influence on the S.D.F. branches in Scotland.'³³ A further influence on the Scottish 'impossibilists' was James Connolly of the Irish Socialist Republican Party (IRSP). Connolly, one-time member of the SDF in Edinburgh, had long been exasperated by what he regarded as the compromising policies of that body. The final straw for him came at the Paris Congress when Hyndman objected to separate representation for the IRSP on the grounds that Ireland was part of Great Britain, not an independent country. Although Congress rejected this argument Connolly saw it as proof of the extent to which the SDF's Socialism had been eroded by imperialism. 'The position taken up at Paris', he said, 'was opposed to the whole tradition and policy of the S.D.F.'³⁴ Connolly had close personal contacts with Yates, who had visited Dublin in 1897 to assist the Irish Socialists in their demonstrations against the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. As Connolly's paper, the Workers' Republic, received financial assistance from de Leon there is no doubt that Connolly himself was influenced by de Leonite ideas. These strands merged in May 1901 when Connolly arrived in Scotland for a lecture tour, making a major impact as 'one of the best propagandists we have'.³⁵

By the time of Connolly's arrival in Scotland the critics of SDF policy had become increasingly outspoken. R. McDonald

of the Glasgow branch accused the Federation of 'criminal weakness, pusillanimity and shame', of having 'truckled to the I.L.P. and the pure and simple unions'.³⁶ Leonard Cotton of Oxford complained of 'a tendency amongst us to admit anyone as a comrade if he adopted our label and consented to swallow a little municipal sewage by way of credentials'.³⁷ Another member urged that they should 'purge the S.D.F. of the diplomats or others who imagine they are going to win by saying soft things to false friends or perchance are trying to build personal reputations of municipal statemanship on the ruins of revolutionary Social-Democracy'.³⁸ As Tsuzuki has commented,

The impossibilists were impartial in their attacks on all union and socialist leaders as 'fakirs' - whether they belonged to the official S.D.F., the I.L.P., the L.R.C., or the trade unions, all provided abundant material for their bitter criticism.³⁹

They began to talk openly of a rupture with the S.D.F. Cotton 'would rather have a small party all pulling one way, than a large party pulling in all directions but the right one',⁴⁰ whilst C. Geis warned that to avoid the possibility of future faction SDFers should raise themselves 'to the highest level of intolerance'.⁴¹

The opposition's first success came in Scotland where a Yates motion to the Scottish District Council of the SDF proposing their withdrawal from the Scottish Workers' Parliamentary Election Committee was carried by 17 votes to 6. J. Carstairs Matheson of Falkirk, a schoolmaster whom

Justice had previously described as 'one of the best educated and best informed men in the whole movement',⁴² moved a further resolution proposing hostility to any alliance 'with the Independent Labour Party, trade unionists, co-operators, vegetarians, anti-vaccinators, the Young Men's Christ Association' or any other body opposed to the class war.⁴³ This was comfortably defeated but Matheson's bracketing of trade unions with such fringe organisations demonstrated clearly the implacable hostility of the 'impossibilists' to SDF policy. The response of the SDF leadership was muted and conciliatory. A 'Tattler' article attempted a weak defence of the Federation's position, arguing that a revolutionary Socialist 'must deal with things as they come along, he must be practical'.⁴⁴ Dora Montefiore suggested that 'Socialism may contain two sides, the revolutionary and the evolutionary side, and yet both sides are Socialism'.⁴⁵ What was most significant though was a hardening line towards the unions and the LRC.

The SDF did not regard the first Annual Conference of the LRC as a great success; it was not 'hopefully suggestive of a vigorous effort to establish a real independent fighting working class party'.⁴⁶ Four months later Justice accused the trade unions of acting as 'mere decoy ducks of the capitalists' and deplored the lack of principle behind labour representation.⁴⁷ A long 'Tattler' article before the SDF Conference warned against any alliance with the unions although supporting 'occasional co-operation for a definite object' and a Quelch editorial in the week prior to the conference

rammed the message home. 'It is our mission to bring the other sections of the working class movement forward. We can do this best by holding ourselves free as a party while serving the trade unions as individuals'.⁴⁸ Accepting the trade unions as allies, the SDF would be handicapped 'by the backwardness of those whom we seek to help'.⁴⁹

As the leadership strove to minimise the dissent Quelch's role was pivotal. Hyndman at this time was somewhat detached from SDF activities and he announced his resignation from the Executive shortly before the 1901 Conference. Ostensibly his reasons were dissatisfaction with the British working class as a potential revolutionary force and disillusionment with the SDF's progress. Weariness undoubtedly contributed to his resignation, as did personal financial problems, but Hyndman was very much aware of mounting criticism within the party, exemplified by the election of Theodore Rothstein to the Executive at the head of the poll.⁵⁰ His was in many senses a political withdrawal, a refusal to identify with either side in the debate. Whatever the reason Quelch, editor of Justice, assumed a much larger voice in SDF councils and his 'orthodox-Marxist' tendency reasserted itself, retreating from the alliance with the pro-union forces which had enabled the SDF to enter the LRC. Quelch and the centre grouping were not motivated solely by the prospect of internal division within the SDF. The major industrial defeats of 1897 and 1898 - the Penrhyn slatemens, the engineers and the South Wales miners -

had already sown doubts as to the wisdom of their shift of position prior to the 1897 Conference. A casual glance at Justice during the engineers strike, for example, would have elicited little information about the strike and Quelch's editorials resumed the familiar hectoring tone, expressing support for the strike in one breath but pointing out that strikes were an 'unmixed evil' the next. Scepticism about the efficacy of trade unionism was reinforced by the publication of a previously unavailable Marxist text, Value, Price and Profit. This work concluded that capitalism tended to reduce wages to their minimum level and that the only solution was working-class political action leading to legislative interference. Furthermore, many Socialists were impressed by the growth of trusts and cartels in this period, a development which they saw as further weakening the capacity of the trade unions to influence events. A corollary of this was that 'trustification' prepared the way for Socialism, because industrial organisation on such a huge scale would allow Socialists to administer industry on behalf of the State after their takeover. For these reasons the 'orthodox-Marxists' were susceptible to the 'impossibilist' arguments.

Why didn't the Federation simply expel what was, after all, a very small and divisive minority?⁵¹ Although they were few in number the 'impossibilists' were exceedingly vocal and an increasingly influential minority in certain areas. Jack Kent in London had been SDF lecture secretary and was on the Executive, as was Leonard Cotton in Oxford. The Scottish

dissenters had captured the Leith and Falkirk branches, severely disrupted the Edinburgh and Glasgow branches, and were able to control the District Council. They had the backing of William Gee, the Scottish organiser, as well as James Connolly. Their adherence to de Leonite ideology gave them a coherent theory which was proving attractive to many outside their ranks. Thus, although few in number, the expulsion of these members would have had a disproportionate effect on an organisation which, although it claimed 9,000 members, probably had only 1,000 activists in 50 functioning branches at that time. Also the leadership still remembered the events of 1884 and must have been acutely aware of the bitter feuding rending the American and French parties. The dissidents were, in part, simply a further expression of the long-term internal debate over the direction of SDF policy, and their views on trade unions were certainly not without support within the party. Thus the 'impossibilists' would eventually bring to a head the reform or revolution debate, but in the short term their challenge led to a withdrawal from the Labour Representation Committee. The achievements of the Committee, it was felt, did not justify remaining in membership at the cost of internal repute within the SDF.

The SDF's 21st Annual Conference, held at Birmingham on the 4th and 5th of August 1901, was a vituperative gathering. Opposition to party policy manifested itself in a Leonard Cotton resolution censuring those who supported Kautsky at the International Congress. He was supported by Matheson, who

protested at the 'wave of moderation' which had swept the Socialist movement, and by Gee, who complained that the class struggle had been abandoned in the Kautsky resolution. Yet, as Quelch was well aware, the real target of the largely Scottish opposition was the party leadership. He condemned those 'certain members of working-class organisations eager to show their gratitude by casting aside men who, like Hyndman, had devoted their lives to the cause', and attacked them for attempting 'to sidetrack the Socialist movement in this country into the impossibilism which seventeen years ago led to the formation and, later, to the collapse of the Socialist League'.⁵² The SDF, said Quelch, 'were not impossibilists and circumstances must determine our policy'.⁵³ His speech had the desired effect and the 'impossibilist' resolution was heavily defeated. Undeterred, Yates then challenged the leadership over the control of Justice. Although the official voice of the SDF the paper was owned by the Twentieth Century Press, in which Hyndman and his supporters had a majority shareholding. Yates suggested that the party should take over the paper as a means of reducing Hyndmanite hegemony, but this too was voted down, by 41 votes to 17. His motion opposing any further unity negotiations with the ILP was also lost. But on one issue the dissidents achieved success. In an attempt to maintain party unity Quelch proposed for the Executive that the SDF should withdraw from the Labour Representation Committee. The pretext was the low union membership affiliated to the LRC, and Quelch emphasised that withdrawal was not synonymous with antagonism to the trade unions. Thus a Falkirk resolution repudiating all political alliances with non-Socialist organisations was lost,

but by 54 votes to 14, the delegates approved the Executive motion. The flexible line adopted in 1897 had been overcome by events and the consensus had shifted to the 'orthodox-Marxist' viewpoint; there was to be limited co-operation in the economic sphere, individual members had roles to play in their trade unions, but a formal alliance for political objectives was rejected as undermining the independence of the SDF.

Such a compromise was fraught with difficulty. It prevented the adoption of any consistent strategy, whether pro or anti-union. Many SDFers were heavily involved in their unions, yet at the very moment when the Labour movement was developing a serious political commitment the Federation rejected an alliance which its own members had helped to promote. Preoccupied with its own internal debates the Federation removed itself from the decision-making process at a crucial moment, thus contributing to the marginalisation of the Socialist option in the face of the Labour Alliance. Yet simultaneously the SDF found itself vulnerable to attack from the left as a consequence of its failure to develop a consistent revolutionary strategy. After its first twenty years the SDF had still to resolve its fundamental dilemma - how best to marry its revolutionary aims with its reformist practice. J. Carstairs Matheson, the Falkirk schoolmaster, posed the problem very clearly. There was no room for the SDF as a reform party, he said, for there were too many rivals. 'Still less possible is it to be at once a reform and a revolutionary party...a revolutionary programme is the only practicable and consistent position if we are to escape political annihilation'.⁵⁴

The SDF's response to its predicament was to return Socialist unity to the agenda. David Howell has argued that the united Socialist option had, by this time, been effectively ruled out by the emergence of the Labour Representation Committee. 'The logic of national events...combined with local developments...to erode the United Socialist alternative, even in an environment where it had developed a significant presence'.⁵⁵ Similarly Stephen Yeo suggests that by the turn of the century Socialist unity had become less likely because the fervour and commitment of the 1890s, the air of optimism fuelled by a belief in imminent change, had dissipated in the face of the resilience of British capitalism and the retrenchment of the Liberal Party. This led the ILP cabal of Hardie, Snowden, Glasier and MacDonald to take effective control of the party and steer it on the path of a broad Labour alliance at the expense of Socialist commitment. What is certain is that the SDF facilitated this course of events by its withdrawal from the LRC, thereby effectively reducing Socialist influence within the Labour movement and at the same time making unity with the ILP even less likely. Party activists were thereby placed in an invidious position. If they remained in the local Labour committees which had sprung up around the country, and which very often they had helped to form, they then found themselves at odds with national party policy; on the other hand if they withdrew they exposed themselves to the very charges of 'impossibilism' and 'wrecking' which Quelch had been at pains to refute at the 1901 Conference. The sheer inconsistency of the SDF position, neither reformist nor revolutionary, rendered

effective action impossible. Nowhere was the dilemma more acutely felt than in Lancashire, the Federation's main provincial centre, where the consequences of withdrawal from the LRC were clearly visible.

NOTES.

1. E. B. Bax and H. Quelch, A New Catechism of Socialism, (6th edition, 1909), pp.38-40.
2. See Chapter IV.
3. Clarion, 31 August 1901.
4. Justice, 1 October 1898.
5. Ibid., 9 January 1897. See also George Lansbury, arguing for SDFers to gain seats on the Boards of Guardians, in the Social-Democrat, January 1897.
6. Justice, 10 August 1901.
7. H. M. Hyndman to A. M. Simons, quoted in S. Pierson, British Socialists: The Journey from Fantasy to Politics. (1979), pp.81-82.
8. Justice, 29 January 1898.
9. See, for example, the letter from a Lancashire member re the Middleton by-election in Justice, 20 November 1897.
10. Ibid., 2 July 1892.
11. Ibid., 3 June 1899.
12. Ibid., 10 August 1895.
13. This policy was similar to the ILP's local option arrangement.
14. Justice, 12 August 1899.
15. Ibid., 19 August 1899.
16. Ibid., 11 August 1900.
17. N. and J. Mackenzie, The First Fabians, (1977), pp.232-233.
18. Ethical World, 8 October 1896.

19. S. Yeo, Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis, (1976), p.262.
20. Justice, 13 January 1900.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Two SDF, two ILP and one Fabian. The SDF representatives were Harry Quelch and James MacDonald.
24. Justice, 3 March 1900.
25. Lee and Archbold, op.cit., p.106; H. M. Hyndman, Further Reminiscences, (1912), p.269.
26. Justice, 24 February 1900.
27. Lee and Archbold, op.cit., p.159.
28. Ibid., pp.158-160.
29. The SDF had originally opposed Millerand's action, but Hyndman in particular had moderated his line, arguing that those on the spot knew best. See Justice, 2 September 1899 and 16 June 1900.
30. See Chapter II.
31. Hence criticism of Quelch as editor at the 1899 Conference.
32. By the turn of the century the membership of the SDF was largely working class although middle and lower-middle class members, particularly that intermediate strata of shopkeepers, clerks, schoolteachers and tradesmen, were still prominent in the organisation and administration of branches. See MacIntyre, op.cit., p.93.
33. C. Tsuzuki, 'The Impossibilist Revolt in Britain', International Review of Social History, volume I, 1956, p.384.
34. Justice, 25 May 1901.

35. Ibid., 13 July 1901.
36. Ibid., 24 November 1900.
37. Ibid., 29 December 1900.
38. Ibid., 5 January 1901.
39. Tsuzuki, 'The Impossibilist Revolt in Britain', op.cit., p.390.
40. Justice, 29 December 1900.
41. Ibid., 4 May 1901.
42. Ibid., 24 January 1901.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., 1 June 1901.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 9 February 1901.
47. Ibid., 6 July 1901.
48. Ibid., 3 August 1901.
49. Ibid.
50. See Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, pp.134 and 140-142.
51. Rabinovitch, op.cit., has estimated a maximum of 320 members out of a total of 9,000, but even this would appear to be an over-estimate. The SDF lost some 80 members to the Socialist Labour Party and 88 to the Socialist Party of Great Britain when these organisations were formed.
52. Justice, 10 August 1901.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., 17 August 1901.
55. D. Howell, 'Was the Labour Party Inevitable', The Bulletin of the North West Labour History Society, 1984, p.17.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SDF IN LANCASHIRE.

The SDF in the 1880s was a London-based and London-orientated party, and the capital assumed a central role in the Federation's strategy. Hyndman expressed this very clearly in an article in Today, where he argued that revolutionaries must strike at the nerve centre of British capitalism. The capture of London, he argued, 'the financial and commercial heart of Europe', would have tremendous repercussions both in England and Europe.¹ He re-emphasised the opinion that London would lead the way to Socialism in his pamphlet, A Commune for London, and London Socialists continued to play a leading role in the Social-Democratic Federation throughout its history. Indeed, by the turn of the century the London Social-Democrats constituted a potent force in the capital. SDF fortunes in London have been comprehensively reviewed by Paul Thompson and therefore do not merit detailed study here.² Nonetheless its achievements in the capital should be noted.

In the mid 1880s the party's Marxist Socialism replaced Secularism as the creed of the politically minded working man. Secularist strength in London was halved between 1885 and 1889. The attractiveness of the SDF's propaganda forced the Liberals to adopt the best and most practicable items of its programme for the first London County Council elections, and consequently SDF influence was temporarily restricted. During the trade union boom of 1889-92 SDFers were active in the unions and

instrumental in turning them towards independent Labour politics. The membership of the London Trades Council trebled in those years and it shifted to a militant standpoint, issuing a joint manifesto for all Labour candidates, including the SDF, for the 1892 County Council elections. Nine Labour men were elected and with the addition of three aldermen, including Ben Tillett, they formed a distinct 'Labour bench' whose political demands were all taken from the SDF. This influential position was partly negated by the Federation's reluctance to countenance a new party based upon the working class rather than a political creed, but even so by 1899 the SDF had over 40 London branches, the best of them in working-class districts. The Federation dominated the Trades Council and the Gasworkers' union, had H. W. Hobart and Fred Knee on the Compositors Committee, and Knee as secretary of the influential Workman's National Housing Council. In West Ham and Bow and Bromley the SDF was the motivating force in strong local Labour Parties, one of which captured the West Ham Borough Council in 1898. The Independent Labour Party was unable to attract the support of any prominent London Labour leaders, the Labour Churches never took root, and support for the Liberals declined due to the Government's failure to keep its election promises, and its inability to find a solution to unemployment. 'Here at least', says Thompson, 'the Social Democrats had effectively won the political leadership of the working class from the Liberals.'³

A concentration on the SDF in London does not provide a balanced picture of the Federation's history. It reinforces

the tendency to view the party through the ideas and activities of the leadership. Also, it is incorrect to suggest that Hyndman and his supporters looked solely to London. From its earliest days the SDF's leading figures had been impressed by what they saw as the revolutionary potential of the industrial workers in the North of England. Hyndman thought that conditions in the northern towns provided the perfect arena for class conflict for there was 'no middle class to break the force of collision between the capitalist and those whom he employs.'⁴ This was an overly simplistic analysis, ignoring the diverse and complex social structure of Lancashire with its pervasive working-class Toryism, but it led to one of the Federation's earliest provincial initiatives, at Blackburn in 1884.⁵ Branches were soon formed at Blackburn, Oldham, Rochdale, Darwen and Salford, but the SDF's presence in Lancashire was far from established and their existence was precarious indeed. Why did the SDF struggle to sink firm roots in Lancashire in the 1880's?

The essential problem was that the early branches were not natural outgrowths of working-class politics in the county. They were heavily dependent on London for both speakers and organisers, a 'grafted political limb' says Jeffrey Hill, and 'there was thus imported into Lancashire a number of metropolitan attitudes which might not have been appropriate for the northern environment'.⁶ As J. R. Widdup, a leading Burnley member in the 1890s, later commented, 'because of the differences in the character and historical traditions of the people there,

methods of propaganda which would be successful in the South might produce little result in the North'.⁷ Consequently the SDF struggled to survive in Lancashire in the mid 1880s. The Blackburn branch was, at one time, reduced to six members, Oldham collapsed completely, and only the dispatch of two Londoners to the province rescued the organisation. John Hunter Watts, a recruit to the SDF from the Secularist movement, organised the Salford branch into an energetic, campaigning body, concentrating on the question of unemployment. Its 'street politics' included open-air meetings, demonstrations and marches, both to publicise the plight of the unemployed and to press for municipal reforms. The latter was to become a major and lasting concern of the SDF in Lancashire but at this time, overly influenced by the London leadership, the Lancashire SDF regarded the politics of demonstration and protest as the only viable form of action. 'Neglect politics and use every available means to force temporary proposals upon the ruling class', said Hyndman, and of course the SDF was then overtly sceptical of the value of trade unions. It had used the Blackburn weavers' strike as an opportunity to denounce the sectional interests of the unions, and this remained its position for much of the 1880s.

The second organiser to arrive in Lancashire, Tom Mann, held very different views. He was responsible for expanding the Bolton branch's membership from 50 to 170, and for rescuing the Blackburn and Darwen branches from their almost moribund state. An eloquent speaker, as Charlie Glyde recalled,⁸ Mann's

focus of attention was the trade union movement, the organised ranks of the working class. The class struggle occurred at the point of production and here therefore the Socialists should concentrate their activities. Socialist consciousness would arise from specific struggles. Mann also persuaded the branch to put up six candidates for the municipal elections in September 1887 and to ask for Trades Council support, although this was not forthcoming. Hardly surprisingly then, he viewed with distaste what he regarded as Hunter Watts' revolutionary posturing, his 'bundle-handkerchief men' and 'street-corner cheap jacks'. He also resented London interference in the affairs of the provincial branches. Eventually, disillusioned by what he saw as the sterile propagandism of the SDF, Mann drifted away⁹ but his emphasis upon Socialist permeation of the unions, municipal electioneering and branch autonomy remained to influence the Lancashire SDF.

Thus, in the 1880s, the SDF was mainly concerned with keeping its own branches alive. As H. W. Lee reported to the Annual Conference in 1888, the area was a disappointment for 'more work has been put into that district than any other.' What was lacking, he said, was 'that nucleus of a few speakers and organisers in each town which is absolutely necessary to keep a good branch afloat'.¹⁰ Activity consisted largely of propaganda, spreading the gospel, leaving the Federation isolated at a time when many local Trades Councils were beginning to develop a specifically 'Labour' consciousness and aiming for

Labour representation via the ballot box. As James Mawdsley, Conservative leader of the Cotton Spinners, explained:

There is ample room for our efforts in regard to legitimate social reform and in the improvement of the conditions under which we live and work, without troubling our minds with the unworkable theories of Mr. Hyndman....¹¹

Nonetheless, the SDF survived and its fortunes began to improve. Darwen reported that 'things are looking up a little', that the branch now had half a dozen speakers who could hold their own for half an hour or so and that audiences were increasing where 'Twelve months ago sympathisers were few and far between.'

¹² Salford too had developed a cadre of members, men such as Tabbron, Horrocks and Evans, who took advantage of the advent of new unionism to extend the influence of the branch.

Horrocks, Tabbron and W. K. Hall, 'a miner with an ascetic appearance and a cool, argumentative speaking style',¹³ were instrumental in establishing the local gasworkers branch, which soon gained the eight-hour day and wage increases. Horrocks became the union's organising secretary for Lancashire. Another member, Purves, was active amongst the dockers and Leonard Hall, a member of the SDF at that time, became an official of the Navvies' Union. Branch membership increased,¹⁴ attendances at outdoor meetings improved and Tabbron was elected county borough auditor. With Rochdale also reporting encouraging results and Joe Shufflebotham reorganising the Bolton

branch the outlook in Lancashire seemed brighter. Leonard Hall certainly thought so. At one time, he said, 'I was accustomed to be laughed at in Lancashire; arrested in Barrow; bricked, chased, and anathematised in Blackburn.' Now, he reported, the crowds were more likely to turn on the interrupters

¹⁵ The Salford SDF took advantage of this. Its work at the Manchester and Salford gasworks in the summer of 1889 had drawn it into the orbit of the local Trades Council and, thereby, into the conflict between Labour and the Manchester Liberal Union over the latter's refusal to countenance Labour representation. In August 1891 the Salford Labour Electoral Association was formed, comprising representatives from the Trades Council, the new unions, and the SDF. However, the only factor unifying these disparate elements was hostility to official Liberalism, and friction soon developed between the Radicals and the SDF. The result was a divided movement at the municipal elections of 1891. Alf Settle of the SDF, standing in Ordsall ward where he had polled well the year before, was opposed by the Radical secretary of the Carters and Lorrymen's Union and was defeated. Further wrangling followed over the parliamentary candidature for South Salford. W. K. Hall, the SDF candidate, was totally unacceptable to many non-Socialists and although he attempted to win over his opponents by standing on an essentially Radical programme he was soundly defeated at the polls and the Labour Electoral Association soon collapsed. Nothing daunted, the SDF co-operated shortly afterwards in the formation of the Manchester ILP as

a further attempt at promoting Labour unity, which accounts, says Jeffrey Hill, for the Manchester ILP's 'strongly leftist preoccupations'.¹⁶

The Salford branch of the SDF had moved away from the street campaigning of the 1880s towards participation in a Labour alliance. Although its early attempts were fraught with difficulty it persevered and eventually became a constituent part of the Manchester Independent Labour Party, strongly influencing its ideology and style of campaigning. In this it had pointed the way for other branches and it did so at a time when the SDF was breaking out of its South-East Lancashire base and gaining support in the rapidly growing towns of the North-Eastern part of the county. Here the Social-Democratic Federation was to establish its most durable stronghold.

In June 1891 Herbert Burrows arrived in Nelson to inaugurate a branch of the SDF. He spoke on 'The Meaning of Socialism', adapting his message to the traditional concerns of the Liberal textile workers in his audience. Neither teetotalism nor trade unionism was the answer to their problems, said Burrows, for both were an implicit recognition of capitalism. The workers must demand the Eight-Hour day and universal suffrage as the first steps on the road to emancipation. He met with a good response, a branch some 30 strong being organised. Shortly afterwards members of this branch visited Burnley and met with even more success. By mid-1893 Burnley could report over 600 members, making it by far the largest SDF branch, and

the Federation's Annual Conference was held in the town. Other branches were established in the surrounding districts, at Padiham, Colne and Brierfield. What factors led to this quite startling success in North-East Lancashire?

Nelson and Burnley in the 1880s have been likened to 'frontier towns'.¹⁷ The district experienced rapid economic growth, which was accompanied by a population boom. Nelson, for example, expanded from a town of 4,000 in the 1860s to one of over 20,000 by 1890. Much of this growth could be accounted for by an influx into the area of thousands of migrant workers, particularly from the Yorkshire Dales, Cowling, Keighley and the Pennine uplands. The relative newness of industrial growth had considerable repercussions on the political life of the area. It meant that the trade unions were less incorporated into the traditions of co-operation and collective bargaining which tended to defuse conflict in the spinning industry for example. The weavers of Nelson and Burnley were to prove far more receptive to Socialist propaganda than the elitist spinners with their tendency to Toryism. Similarly in mining, Burnley's other major industry, the unions had a fluctuating history, and a stable branch of the Lancashire Miners' Federation was only formed as late as 1888. Consequently the leadership of the unions was never fully in control of its members, and rank and file militancy could be exploited by the SDF. A factor encouraging militancy was the absence of that personal relation

ship between employer and employee which characterised industrial relations in Blackburn, where industry was much better established. This was a consequence of the extensive migration into the area and many of these immigrants brought with them radical traditions which were grafted on to existing democratic traditions which flourished locally. Such militancy was further encouraged by the appalling living conditions resulting from rapid industrialisation. Housing conditions and child mortality rates were significantly worse than in the older cotton towns. At the turn of the century the infant death rate in Burnley was as high as the national average for India,¹⁸ and the town was hugely overcrowded owing to the abuses of unplanned growth. The appalling results of child labour and the half-time system were also very visible in Burnley. Thus the Socialist critique had considerable weight behind it and Hyndman could effectively liken the town to 'One of the hideous hells of Dante'.¹⁹

The dominant Liberal ethos in Burnley rested on the twin pillars of personal regeneration and self-improvement. Yet this cultivation of moral improvement worked two ways. For many in the SDF membership of a temperance group was the first step on the way to political consciousness, whilst the revival of the Socialist ideal of emancipation through education was an unintended consequence of late nineteenth century educational change. Self-improvement became linked with a wider emphasis on economic change, where individual and collective betterment could co-exist. Two members of the Burnley SDF exemplify these

relationships. Dan Irving, the branch organiser, was an ex-Nonconformist, temperance man and member of the Bristol Liberal Operatives Association; John Sparling, secretary of the Burnley Miners, was an ex-bible class teacher and Sunday School superintendent. There were therefore, in North-East Lancashire, various groups 'who reacted to particular blends of economic and cultural experience by going beyond Radicalism to some form of Socialist commitment'.²⁰ One group much neglected by historians is the female workforce of the weaving sheds, for in this area women played a vital role in the growth of Socialism. Their experiences at home and in the workplace, their position of near equality, 'could provoke social enquiry, union activism and Socialist commitment', says Jill Liddington.²¹ The factor which enabled the Social-Democratic Federation to exploit the opportunities available was the enormous ability of its organisers, Dan Irving in particular.

At the end of 1890 Leonard Hall had complained that the SDF executive had fallen prey to the

cockney superstition that London is not only the hub of the insular movement, but also that the provinces in general, and perhaps Lancashire in particular, are the veriest of accidental gnats upon the jelly.²²

If this were so, they were soon impressed by the remarkable

growth of the SDF in North-East Lancashire. A year after Hall's complaint J. Hunter Watts had revived Hyndman's argument of the early 1880s that Lancashire provided the best prospects for the SDF, rather unrealistically suggesting that there the demise of capitalism was imminent and also that there the workers were 'not wedded to Radicalism'.²³ Quelch reinforced the message a few months later. Social-Democrats, he said, must give more attention to North and North-East Lancashire for they had become 'thoroughly permeated with Social-Democratic principles and nowhere does the movement display more hopeful prospects'.²⁴ Encouraged by the early success of the Burnley SDF in gaining a seat on the School Board, the Executive sent Joe Terrett to the area as organiser.

Terrett used the name A. G. Wolfe whilst in Lancashire. A member of the gasworkers and only twenty years old, he had worked for the SDF in London and tramped all over the country lecturing on Socialism. He was a tireless organiser and, when joined by Dan Irving as full-time secretary of the Burnley branch, the SDF had two powerful propagandists. They brought an aggressive, campaigning approach to Lancashire Socialism, but also instilled discipline and organisation into the party, as the following report shows.

A committee of thirty-six members was appointed and the committee was divided into twelve threes: three for each ward of the town. The duty of these three members is to go to private addresses of each member

of the Party in the ward to collect his weekly subscription and to leave his copy of Justice.

Moreover, the collector had to note members' other affiliations. Thus,

By means of this information and industriously whipping up the members, the SDF has been able to place Socialists upon the Committee of the Weavers' Association and also upon the Committee of the Co-operative Society.²⁵

A further vital factor for the SDF was the publication of a weekly Socialist newspaper, the Burnley Socialist and North-East Lancashire Labour News. Its editor was J. R. Widdup²⁶ and it achieved a circulation of 2,000, thus keeping the SDF in the public eye.²⁷ Of overriding importance in extending SDF political influence was its developing relationship with the trade unions. Its Eight-Hour campaign of 1892 had won the support of both the Burnley and Nelson Weavers' Associations. Indeed the programme of the Burnley Weavers' in 1892 included a resolution in favour of 'the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, to be controlled by a democratic state in the interests of the entire community', and it further stated that the 'political and financial support of the Society shall be used towards the creation of an Independent Socialist Party'. But above all else it was the miners' lockout of 1893 which gave the Burnley

SDF a permanent hold on the town. Working conditions in the pits around Burnley were bad, profit margins low, and consequently long hours and low pay were the norm. Furthermore, the coal owners were anti-union. Issues such as these provided an opportunity for Socialist agitation but additionally ethnic and religious differences amongst the miners meant a division of political allegiance between Liberals and Tories. Political solidarity could not, therefore, be achieved under a Lib-Lab banner and the SDF had a political space to occupy. Terrett effectively campaigned amongst the miners during the lock-out, and with local mills closed through lack of fuel found a further response amongst the weavers. As a result John Markham of the SDF became weavers' vice-president, John Sparling secretary of the Burnley miners and James Roberts secretary of the Trades Council. Later in the year the SDF put forward five candidates in the municipal elections on a platform of social reform and independent Labour. Sparling and John Tempest of the Twisters and Drawers were successful. By the end of 1893 the Federation had gained an influential role in working-class politics and a Socialist-led Labour Party seemed a distinct possibility.

However, the aggressive approach of Terrett and Irving was not universally popular. Selina Cooper recalled that during her term on the Burnley Guardians Irving could sometimes be an embarrassing ally, 'with his habit of addressing individuals as if they were public meetings and of losing his temper with his opponents'.²⁸ Keir Hardie attacked them in the Labour

Leader for attempting to wreck the Accrington ILP and form an SDF branch, leading Terrett to retort that 'We have got as much right to push our propaganda among you as among Liberals and Tories. On the other hand so have you with us. And so you do'.²⁹

In Burnley itself the attempt to capture the Weavers' Association as a base for Labour representation provoked a Lib-Lab counter-attack, which demonstrated that the SDF, although powerful, still had much to do. The SDF, by packing the Association's meeting with its members, had succeeded in pushing through a resolution supporting Labour representation in 1894. In addition it had removed from the Liberal-led Executive the power to choose the Association's delegates to the TUC. The Liberals reacted swiftly to the SDF assault on their previously pre-eminent position; adopting similar tactics to the SDF they managed to nullify most of the SDF gains. Labour disunity was emphasised by the fact that at the 1894 municipal elections there were ten Labour candidates of varying persuasions, and none of them was successful. Significantly Robert Stanhope, one of the Lib-Lab leaders of the Trades Council, was elected as a Liberal. In Burnley the willingness of the Liberal party to consider working-class representation maintained ties between Liberals and Labour, and the fact that Philip Stanhope, the town's Liberal M.P., was an extreme Radical also retarded the shift of the Lib-Labs to independence. Stanhope supported the Eight-Hour Day, manhood suffrage, payment of M.P.s and land nationalisation. Thus, when opposed by Hyndman at the

1895 elections, he argued that he was 'a better Socialist than any in the Socialist Party', fighting 'in the interests of Labour...to raise the standard of life'.³⁰ In this context Hyndman scored 1,498 votes out of 12,085 in a three-cornered fight, a not insignificant effort. It is worth noting that some local members felt the candidature premature at this stage. Widdup, for example, attacked the centre for draining the resources of the local SDF,³¹ and the pressure on its finances was shown by the collapse of the Burnley Socialist shortly afterwards. The resilience of the Lib-Labs and a council policy of municipalism led to the loss of the two SDF council seats by 1896, although as some compensation Irving did get on the School Board. These events led to a reaction within the Burnley SDF against the 'Labour alliance' policy. John Sparling was expelled from the branch in 1896 for standing as a Labour candidate and another member castigated the Trades Council as 'thoroughly reactionary'. Yet these were rare aberrations in what was otherwise a consistent policy. From this time onwards there were two bodies seeking the working-class vote in Burnley, each intent on an alliance with the trade unions and, as Jeffrey Hill suggests, 'it is worth noting the extent to which it was the SDF which sought to heal the breach'.³²

The failure of the SDF attempt to form a Socialist-led Labour Party in Burnley does not disprove Hill's argument that SDF success in Lancashire was due largely to its policy and practice of Labour alliance. The attempt to form such an

alliance gave the Federation considerable input into the trade unions and it was these links which enabled the SDF to present the Liberals with a serious challenge over two decades. In Burnley too the strength of Lib-Labism meant that the SDF developed an aggressive stance. It presented a serious ideological alternative to Liberalism and, as Trodd has noted, was a party of definite intellectual hue³³ appealing largely to ex-Radicals and Lib-Labs unhappy at the skewed relationship with the Liberal Party. Contrastingly, in Nelson and Blackburn the SDF was far more successful in its search for an alliance of Socialists and trade unionists and the branches there developed very differently.

There had been a small Lib-Lab group representing the Nelson weavers on the town council since 1890, and the Trades Council was developing an increasingly independent frame of mind and planning a Labour paper. This was due partly to growing disillusionment with the local Liberal party and also to considerable dissatisfaction with the local M.P., W. J. Kay-Shuttleworth. A Labour candidate was mooted for the 1892 election, although never actually brought forward, but discontent increased when the Liberals refused to consider working-class candidates for the 1892 municipal elections. This atmosphere proved conducive to the growth of the SDF branch, founded in June 1891, which had already gained kudos for its struggles to establish the right of free speech. The slump in the cotton industry and

consequent rising unemployment gave it a further outlet for campaigning and SDFers gained local notoriety by forcing their way into a meeting of the Guardians Relief Committee demanding work rather than charity. Thus, when an ILP branch was formed in December 1892 prior to the formation of the national body, the SDF was fully involved and in an influential position. At the ILP's inaugural national conference in Bradford two of the three Nelson representatives, Ernest Johnson and C. W. Parratt, were SDF men. The two parties joined forces with the Trades Council at the municipal elections of 1893, running five candidates of whom two were successful. In the same year Ernest Johnson was elected to the Nelson School Board along with two other Trades Council representatives. As the local paper pointed out,

Comrade Johnson is where he is because the socialist is well organised and therefore instead of wasting their strength in vain and useless rivalry they kept together and what is more to the purpose, worked together.³⁴

This liaison continued throughout the 1890s and into the twentieth century, with jointly-sponsored candidates being successful on both the town council and the Guardians. The Nelson weavers had supported the Socialist resolution at the 1897 Trades Union Congress, and by the turn of the century it is true to say that Socialism had played an important role in forming the basis of a Nelson Labour Party.

Blackburn had been the initial point of entry for the SDF in Lancashire, but the branch had struggled through most of the 1880s in the face of organised attacks on its meetings by gangs of Tory working men. The visit of Tom Mann in 1888 stabilised the situation and the appointment of Tom Hurley as organiser in 1890 revitalised the party. A locally-born Irishman who could tap some support from the Catholic community, Hurley was a good orator who adapted SDF Socialism to appeal to the strong working-class Tory element in the town. Generally in Lancashire working-class Toryism stemmed from a popular bias against the largely Liberal employers, but in Blackburn it was based on the paternalism of the local family firms, an elite of wealthy cotton manufacturers who prided themselves on their community consciousness. Blackburn had a reputation for 'clog Toryism', its working class characterised as 'drinking, roistering Blackburners nearly all of them of the Cockfighting-Church-and-State-Glorious Constitution Party',³⁵ who threw dead cats at Socialist orators. Consequently Blackburn Socialism was less intellectual than its Burnley or Nelson counterparts, concentrating on local issues such as workhouse conditions or union rates and even propagandising in Lancashire dialect. Hurley's complaint that 'the articles which appeared in Justice were sometimes beyond the understanding of Young Socialists who had just come into the movement',³⁶ reflected this approach.

The fact that the Blackburn branch of the SDF needed to draw support from Tory working men led it to develop and maintain

an overt and abrasive hostility to the Liberals. Those from the radical wing of Liberalism who were attracted to Socialism tended to join the ILP, which emerged from the remnants of the town's Fabian Society in 1893, whereas the SDF was better fitted than the ILP to appeal to Blackburn working-class Toryism. It was not teetotal, and sympathised with the Anglican opposition to the Puritanism of Nonconformity. The ILP's Fabian origins caused some initial SDF apprehension that the ILPers would 'carry their jellyfish Fabianism with them', but cooperation between the two bodies soon became the normal order of the day. They worked together in a Tenants Defence League, on an Unemployed Demonstration Committee and in local elections, and they also produced a monthly newspaper, The Blackburn Labour Journal.

Economic and political developments in Blackburn encouraged Socialist progress. The Liberal party was actively hostile to Labour representation, leading the Trades Council to declare its independence as early as 1892. In 1897 the Liberals refused to stand candidates against Tory opposition in the municipal elections, a tacit Liberal-Tory alliance which pushed Lib-Labs like Joe Johnson, the Spinner's secretary, into the independent Labour forces. Opposition on Blackburn council to such demands as fair contracts and minimum wages for corporation workers caused further working-class resentment. Foreign competition led to a slump in the cotton industry, resulting in short-time working and unemployment. The trade unions grew in strength as a result and the Tories, feeling threatened, shed their paternalism and appealed to the middle-class vote by adopting a hosti

attitude to Labour and social reform. Consequently the Tory working-class vote became vulnerable to the Socialist-led Labour forces. Elsewhere the introduction of new technology fostered SDF influence in the Typographical Association and the Sheet Metal Workers' Union, and the party also developed a strong base in the newer unskilled unions, particularly those of the gasworkers and window cleaners. The increasing strength of the Socialist forces was reflected in the electoral campaigns of Hurley. In 1892 he polled only 268 votes in a municipal contest; in 1895 he topped the poll for the School Board and in 1898 he was elected to the Council, winning a seat from the Tory-sponsored secretary of the Weavers' Protection Society. Six SDF/ILP candidates gained a total of 3,027 votes in 1899 and by 1900 there were four Trades Council, two SDF and two ILP councillors, with one ILPer and one SDFer on the Guardians. Hurley had also been elected public auditor. These gains culminated in Philip Snowden's parliamentary candidature in 1900. Snowden stood as a 'Labour and Socialist' candidate, with Albert Brookes of the SDF as his treasurer. As Jeffrey Hill has commented, the SDF's triangular alliance³⁷ with the Trades Council and the ILP had, by 1900,

out-stripped the Liberals as the chief opponent of a very powerful brand of local Toryism; it laid the basis for Philip Snowden's spectacular LRC campaigns of 1900 and 1906 which finally broke the Tories' long-standing monopoly of parliamentary representation in the borough.³⁸

This combination of Socialist and non-Socialist forces to present an independent Labour viewpoint was a crucial factor in the relative success of the SDF in Lancashire. It was never a smooth and unhindered process; there was a Lib-Lab counter-attack in Burnley, whilst the Blackburn Trades Council expelled an executive member in 1895 for 'trying to force down the throats of the Executive his own Socialist ideas in and out of season'. The general hostility of the textile unions as a body often caused strained Labour/Socialist relations. Nonetheless,

What was emerging on a broad front was an open-minded, not to say pragmatic, form of social-democracy in which a willingness to change, to dispense with dogma and, above all, to seek genuine contacts with the labour movement was clearly evident.³⁹

Yet this characterisation of the Social-Democratic Federation tells only half the story, for the Lancashire branches were also amongst the strongest advocates of Socialist unity in the 1890s. The history of the Socialist movement in this period is often posited in terms of Labour alliance or Socialist unity, but the two were not mutually exclusive. In one sense they were interdependent because it obviously made sense for the Socialists to be a united force if they were effectively to seek cooperation from the trade unions. A second motivating factor was simply the relative strengths of the local bodies; unity was often imperative for survival where either the ILP or

the SDF was considerably weaker than the other. This explains the furore in Accrington; contrastingly in Burnley the ILP branch was not formed until 1898 and was completely overshadowed by the SDF, and in Blackburn the three SDF branches boasted 300 members in 1900 as opposed to the ILP's 75.

Furthermore joint membership was common, many Socialists ignoring national controversies in favour of an enthusiastic and wide-ranging espousal of Socialist principles. Such an approach was certainly stimulated by Robert Blatchford's Clarion, which was very influential in Lancashire. A third explanation can be found in the extended time-scale of the Labour alliance policy. The postponement of the social revolution to a more distant future, the concentration upon the gaining of positions on municipal and trade union bodies followed by the grind of committee work, frustrated many activists. As one disappointed member commented, Socialist politics in the late 1890s seemed 'hum-drum and commonplace compared to the good old days of fourteen years ago'.⁴⁰ The vision of a new world had made Socialism 'an adventure - you were up against all t' social conventions, t'press, t'police, church and state, an' sometimes your own family as well.'⁴¹ To move from that sense of adventure to near respectability on Boards of Guardians and town councils was a far cry from 'The Religion of Socialism' explored by Stephen Yeo. Many would have echoed Hunter Watts' plea to

confine ourselves to the propaganda of Socialism at the street corner if success at the polling booth is to render us too respectable to take part in the rough-and-tumble fight against capitalist domination.⁴²

After the disappointing results of the 1895 general election there was a slump in the Socialist movement. Trade union support still seemed a distant objective and therefore Socialist unity was seen as a return to the crusading days, a revival of the idea of Socialism as a separate culture, a total way of life. Here the pervasive influence of Blatchford and Clarion Socialism in Lancashire Labour politics was important. As David Howell argues, Blatchford offered access to the 'cake and ale culture of urban Lancashire'.⁴³ Blatchford's emphasis on hostility to both major parties was essential in an area which differed from national trends because of its strong working-class Toryism. His criticism of the leaderships of both the SDF and the ILP, of the bureaucracies which he considered were strangling the movement, touched a chord in Lancashire where the rank and file of both parties worked side by side. Thus Socialist unity and Labour alliance were mutually reinforcing aspects of the same policy. The alliance was pragmatic politics, to extend Socialist influence within the Labour movement and to achieve the social reforms or 'palliatives' which the SDF believed essential as stepping stones to revolution. Nonetheless the long-term aim remained to convert individuals to Socialism, and Socialist unity can be seen as an impatient response to that time-scale. Rochdale provides an example of the inter-relation between the two.

Rochdale was the largest single-member borough in South

Lancashire, a predominantly textile town, and a stronghold of Liberalism. The massive Liberal hegemony in the borough produced an indifference to working-class demands which was a major factor in the emergence of both the SDF and the ILP. The SDF branch was formed in 1887 with only three members, renting a cellar at two shillings per week for its meetings. In common with other Lancashire branches at the time it struggled to survive, relying on the occasional speaker imported from Manchester and concentrating its activities around public meetings to protest at the level of unemployment. Indeed its main claim to fame was that it had the oldest living SDFer, a Mrs. Holmes, who was a member of a family running a Socialist public house.⁴⁴ The branch's first foray into municipal politics came in November 1890 when it stood three candidates on an eight-point programme which included the Eight-Hour Day, trade union rates for corporation workers and free, secular education. This essentially Labour programme was aimed at winning trade-union support, and a feature of Rochdale Social-Democracy was its links with trade unionism. Although the polls were extremely disappointing,⁴⁵ the SDF was not discouraged. Its candidate for the School Board in 1891 fared much better under the cumulative voting system and polled 6,349 votes, leading the branch to proclaim that they had become 'a recognizable party in this town and we have every prospect of doing good work in the future, as we are financially in a good position and our membership still increases.'⁴⁶

In May 1892 the Federation approached the Trades Council

to ask for a joint platform at the next elections. The response is unknown, but Trades Council dissatisfaction with Liberal attitudes towards Labour caused them to put forward two candidates on a programme which included the Eight-Hour Day and municipalisation, whilst the SDF had only one candidate. The municipal results in 1892 were considerably better than on the previous occasion⁴⁷ and provided the impetus first for a local Fabian Society and then for a branch of the ILP. Its raison d'être was hostility to the Liberals for as James Firth, a leading Trades Councillor, said, 'on the great questions affecting the working classes both political parties were at one'.⁴⁸ The committee of the new ILP acknowledged 'kindredship with the Socialists' and the two bodies cooperated in organising a Keir Hardie meeting in December 1892.

Over the next three years the ILP and SDF mounted a combined assault upon the Liberal Party in Rochdale. In the 1894 municipal elections ILP intervention cost the Liberals a seat and the SDF came close to unseating a Liberal in another ward. The Liberal response was to detach the Trades Council from the Socialists with what the Rochdale Times called 'an avalanche of promises',⁴⁹ and at the same time to appoint leading Trades Council members to the Executive of the Reform Association. This effectively halted Trades Council political activity but it did not prevent Labour criticism of a Liberal Party dominated by landlords and capitalists and largely impervious to working-class demands. SDF and ILP membership increased, as did their influence, and at the general election in 1895 they united

behind George Barnes of the ILP as parliamentary candidate. Barnes stood on the basis that both parties were equally indifferent to working-class interests, and to the amazement of the Liberals his intervention cost them the seat.⁵⁰

SDF and ILP co-operation was maintained after the election. They shared a newspaper, The Rochdale Labour News, and established a joint election committee. The alliance continuously sought the support of the Trades Council and the local unions, in spite of frustration with their Liberal attachment. 'What the workers need', said one SDFer, 'is not Labour representation but Socialist representation.'⁵¹ But the Socialists' efforts were thwarted by the Liberal policy of nominating leading trades unionists as their municipal candidates and thereby dividing the Trades Council. Pelling has suggested that this led to an SDF Socialism of the uncompromising type⁵² but is this true? Although frustrated with local trade unionism the SDF recognised that mere anti-Liberal propaganda was insufficient and that a broader base in the trade unions was needed. Setbacks at the polls in 1897 confirmed this. Yet at the same time the logic of events in Rochdale contributed to support for Socialist unity. In May 1898 the Labour News declared for fusion and in March of that year the ILP had cancelled a meeting because Hyndman was in the town visiting the SDF. The two bodies joined forces to support Thomas Hacking of the SDF in Wardleworth West Ward at the municipal elections of the same year. Hacking was a leading member of the Trades Council and stood with its support. He was organiser of the Bakers and Confectionery operatives for

15 years and also active in organising the bleaching and dying trades. The Liberal Party refused to allow him a free run and stood a so-called 'Progressive' against him in the shape of a seventy three year old ex-cotton manufacturer. As a result the ILP suspended its 'fourth clause' and urged the electorate to vote Tory in other wards. Hacking won, to become the SDF's first councillor, and a Liberal was defeated in Castleton East ward. Soon afterwards R. Thompson of the SDF was elected Borough Auditor. Heartened by these results the Socialist forces decided to contest the 1900 Parliamentary election with Allan Clarke, ex-millworker and early SDFer but now a member of the ILP, as their candidate. The Liberals retaliated with a local candidate, Gordon Harvey, who stressed his Radicalism; his election programme demonstrated the extent of the transformation wrought by Socialism, as he attempted to steal their thunder. Yet, in spite of a badly organised campaign by Clarke, he gathered 901 votes, sufficient to deprive the Liberals of the seat again.

Thus in Rochdale the SDF had not been able to create a formal Labour alliance but it had constituted one vital part of an effective Socialist force within the town. This had been achieved because its continued efforts to forge a trade union alliance had enabled it to develop significant links with trade unionists. Its avowed anti-Liberalism had also gained it support. The events of the 1890s, however, led the Rochdale Socialists to draw the moral that Socialist as opposed to Labour

success was possible. As Thomas Whittaker argued after the 1900 election the 'Socialist vote pure and simple had increased by five hundred since the last election.'⁵³ The defeat of Philip Snowden in Blackburn was interpreted as showing that Liberals would vote Tory rather than Socialist and this somewhat naive assessment made the Rochdale comrades determined to maintain their independence. In this they had the support of the ILP branch, and it is worth noting that the Federation's dominance of the alliance was achieved in spite of an ILP membership of 300, which made it one of the largest branches in the county. This in itself militates against any notion of SDF intransigence or dogmatism.

Tsuzuki has classified the Lancashire members of the SDF as belonging to the right-wing of the party, owing to their attempts to forge links with the trade unions and their concentration on municipal electioneering. This is an over-simplistic view of SDF ideology in Lancashire. What characterised the party there, above all else, was its flexibility. It was prepared to tailor its approach to its environment and respond to specific trends in the locality. 'A search through local Socialist literature for indications of SDF dogmatism and isolation from the main currents of working-class life would be an unrewarding experience says David Howell.'⁵⁴ Members could embrace both Socialist unity and Labour alliance, unemployed demonstrations and council

elections. Yet the undeniable trend was towards the formation of Labour alliances, and even if the attempt was unsuccessful it meant that the SDF developed links with individual trade unionists and considerable influence upon individual trade unions. Essentially the SDF acted as a catalyst for the Labour movement in Lancashire. In Burnley, Nelson and other parts of the county it began what was to be the long process of Liberal disestablishment, demonstrating to the working-class electorate that Liberal values which had remained unchanged for decades did not perhaps represent their best interests. In Blackburn the Federation proved attractive to a section of the working-class Tory electorate as the community base of Tory paternalism crumbled. Whether appealing to Liberal or Tory working men, the significance of the SDF lay 'in the permeation of socialist ideas that ultimately demanded a shift in the local power structure'.⁵⁵ In the long term the beneficiary was the Labour Representation Committee but during the 1890s the Federation enjoyed something of a golden age, which suggested to many of its activists that a new society was attainable. This, in part, explains the enthusiasm for Socialist unity.

The ILP, arriving relatively late on the Lancashire scene, was heavily influenced by SDF tactics and theory and the two were often indistinguishable. After national unity negotiations had broken down, Charles Higham of the Blackburn ILP could point out that

in Blackburn, Nelson, Rochdale, Ashton and several

other places, the local branches of the I.L.P. and S.D.F. already work cordially side by side and for elections and many propaganda purposes are already virtually federated together.⁵⁶

Co-operation with the ILP and SDF tactics generally in Lancashire were not meant to imply an abandonment of revolutionary principles, hence Dan Irving's warning to SDFers who were elected to public bodies not to lose sight of their ultimate objective. The watering down of the Socialist commitment was certainly the danger inherent in the Lancashire approach, but SDFers there viewed Labour representation and social reform not only as part of the campaign to gain the SDF palliatives but also as a means of making Socialists. The Lancashire SDFers perhaps viewed the revolution on a somewhat longer time-scale than members elsewhere. As Hill comments, they had '...come to terms with the region's social and economic structure, accepting the fact of trade unionism and attempting to synthesise a policy out of the ballot box and the union card.'⁵⁷ Trodd's argument that SDF intervention in the unions 'was not related in any effective way to the broader scheme of social-democratic theorising'⁵⁸ has some validity but this simply reflects the confused thinking of the national body. The major proportion of the Lancashire membership more realistically recognised that unions operated at the strategic position of the point of production and that Socialists must operate there if they were to foster wider class-consciousness. Their increasing influence within Federation circles helped to

persuade the party, however hesitatingly, to affiliate to the Labour Representation Committee. The secession from that organisation 18 months later caused dismay in the Lancashire branches and their ⁿs were the loudest voices in favour of reaffiliation. This was hardly surprising as the split caused something of a slump in SDF fortunes in the county, so much so that by 1901 Hyndman was castigating the Blackburn and Burnley branches as 'wholly destitute of political aptitude', whilst the Lancashire District Council was dissolved in May 1902⁵⁹ because of the lack of support from the branches.

The Lancashire branches generally, though Rochdale was an exception, did not favour Socialist unity as an alternative to the Labour alliance; they saw both as complementary facets of a single strategy. However, after the SDF's withdrawal from the LRC the Federation nationally supported ILP/SDF unity rather than an alliance of Socialists and Labour. The 1902 Dewsbury by-election was seen as evidence of the viability of this strategy. A study of the Yorkshire branches of the SDF, and Dewsbury in particular, provides a stark contrast to the history of the party in Lancashire and serves yet again to illustrate the diverse nature of the Federation. In West Yorkshire we see clearly a picture of the SDF as a propagandist organisation, isolated from the wider Labour movement and therefore more akin to the conventional stereotype. In Dewsbury the difficulties caused by withdrawal from the LRC are plainly visible, but the branch there demonstrates both the strengths and weaknesses of the Social-Democratic Federation and its dependence upon the

rest of the Labour movement despite its assertive independence.

NOTES

1. Today, January 1884.
2. P. Thompson, Socialists, Liberals, and Labour, The Struggle for London 1885-1914, (1967); P. Thompson, 'Liberals, Radicals, and Labour in London 1880-1900', Past and Present, No. 27, April 1964, pp.73-102.
3. Thompson, 'Liberals, Radicals, and Labour in London', p.95.
4. H. M. Hyndman, 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch', Nineteenth Century, IX, January 1881, pp.1-8.
5. See Chapter II for an account of the formation of the Blackburn branch.
6. Hill, 'Social-Democracy and the Labour Movement', p.49.
7. Justice, 10 November 1894.
8. For this and a more detailed account of the Bolton and Manchester branches in the 1880s see Chapter 4.
9. Mann later became a union organiser and secretary of the ILP. After a temporary return to the ranks of the SDF he was a prominent syndicalist and then Communist Party militant, a perpetual wanderer through the highways and byways of the Socialist movement. For further details of Mann's career see the biographical notes.
10. Justice, 11 August 1888.
11. Cotton Factory Times, 16 January 1885, quoted in J. Hill, 'Working-class politics in Lancashire, 1885-1906. A Regional Study in the Origins of the Labour Party'. Unpublished Ph.D. University of Keele, 1969, p.186.

12. Justice, 13 July 1889.
13. Hill, 'Working-class politics in Lancashire', p.242.
14. The secretary of the South Salford branch reported 44 members in October 1890 and, amusingly, a division of the membership into 10 separate committees.
15. Justice, 20 September 1890.
16. See also Chapter VII.
17. J. Liddington, The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel: Selina Cooper 1864-1946, (1984).
18. In 1901 the infant death rate in Burnley was 227 per 1,000.
19. Justice, 19 August 1893.
20. Howell, British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, p.55.
21. Liddington, op.cit., pp.38-39.
22. Justice, 20 September 1890.
23. Ibid., 25 July 1891.
24. Ibid., 23 April 1892.
25. Workmans' Times, 12 August 1893, quoted in Hill, 'Social Democracy and the Labour Movement', p.50.
26. Widdup later moved to Dewsbury as organiser. See Chapter X.
27. The National Executive was in fact concerned that sales of Justice were affected by the Burnley Socialist and raised the matter at the SDF's Annual Conference.
28. Liddington, op.cit., p.113.
29. A. G. Wolfe to Keir Hardie in the ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Correspondence, 94/24. Terrett (Wolfe) joined the

ILP in Sheffield shortly afterwards, but later rejoined the SDF in London. For his Yorkshire activities see Chapter X.

30. Burnley Gazette, 17 June 1895.
31. Ibid., 22 February 1896.
32. Hill, 'Social-Democracy and the Labour Movement', p.50.
33. G. Trodd, 'Political Change and the Working Class in Blackburn and Burnley, 1880-1914.' Unpublished Ph.D, University of Lancaster, 1978.
34. Nelson Chronicle, 12 May 1893.
35. William Abram in Freelance, 12 October 1867, quoted in Trodd, op.cit., p.44.
36. SDF Annual Conference Report, 1894, pp.21-2
37. Alliance is, perhaps, a misnomer as the SDF/ILP slate was separate to that of the Trades Council, dominated by cotton unions suspicious of the Socialists. What was important was that Socialist influence had helped to foster the idea of political independence and thus produce a united campaign for Snowden.
38. Hill, 'Social-Democracy and the Labour Movement', p.48.
39. Ibid., p.49.
40. Social-Democrat, January 1897.
41. Fred Shaw, quoted in R. Groves, The Strange Case of Victor Grayson, (1975), p.33.
42. Justice, 10 October 1891.
43. Howell, British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, p.380.
44. See Justice, 1 October 1892 and 13 April 1895.
45. The three candidates polled 78 votes, 26 votes and 22

votes.

46. Justice, 2 January 1892.
47. The Trades Council nominees polled 281 votes and 168 votes, the SDF candidate 158.
48. Rochdale Observer, 18 November 1892.
49. Rochdale Times, 1 December 1894, quoted in M. Coneys, 'The Labour Movement and the Liberal Party in Rochdale 1890-1906,' Unpublished M.A. dissertation, Huddersfield Polytechnic, 1982, p.36.
50. The result was Royds (Conservative) 4,781, Bright (Liberal) 4,359, Barnes 1,251.
51. Rochdale Labour News, May 1897.
52. H. Pelling, The Social Geography of British Elections, p.255, quoted in Coneys, op.cit., p.59.
53. Rochdale Observer, 6 October 1900.
54. Howell, British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, p.211.
55. Trodd, op.cit., p.328.
56. ILP Conference Report, 1899, p.9, quoted in Hill, 'Social-Democracy and the Labour Movement', p.49.
57. Hill, 'Working-class Politics in Lancashire', p.254.
58. Trodd, op.cit., p.340.
59. Justice, 31 May 1902.

CHAPTER X

THE S.D.F. IN YORKSHIRE AND THE DEWSBURY

BY-ELECTION OF 1902.

James Bartley, writing in The Clarion, recalled an early attempt to form a Socialist society in Bradford in 1872. They were, he remembered, 'a little coterie.... Socialists in a strictly literary or academic sense' with some attachment to the ideas of Louis Blanc.¹ Until the early 1880s they met to debate Socialist theory and occasionally to hear a lecturer speaking, for example on the revolutions of 1848. Then, 'About 1883 echoes of the Democratic Federation began to be heard'. In February of the following year William Morris spoke at the Temperance Hall in Bradford on 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil'. Morris was disappointed at his reception, referring to the workers of Bradford as 'a sad set of Philistines',² but his meeting stimulated discussion and 'two or three "advanced" men',³ acquired Federation literature. At a session of the Bradford Parliamentary Debating Society George Minty spoke in favour of forming a branch of the Democratic Federation. A preliminary meeting was held in June 1884 and another a fortnight later but there is no evidence to suggest that a branch was ever formed. The accolade of the earliest branch in Yorkshire fell to Leeds, a Morris visit again providing the stimulus. He was followed by J. L. Mahon lecturing on 'The method of robbing the workers' to a meeting attended by 'friends' from Bradford, and a Leeds branch of the Social-Democratic

Federation was formed in September with Tom Maguire as secretary. The branch boasted an initial membership of 25, with a strange mixture of members from St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church and refugees from Secularism. In November 1884 a Hull branch was formed, but hopes of further expansion in Yorkshire were dashed by the secession from the Federation of William Morris and his adherents. The early Socialists in the West Riding of Yorkshire had been heavily influenced by Morris and the Leeds SDF, having requested more information on the split, followed him into the Socialist League. Minty, Fred Jowett, Paul Bland, Fred Pickles and other sympathisers in Bradford similarly threw in their lot with the League. The Hull branch remained as the only bastion of the SDF in Yorkshire and it collapsed at the end of 1885.

The 1880s was a barren period for the Federation in Yorkshire, punctuated by isolated attempts at propaganda. Jonathan Taylor of Sheffield was a prominent member, on the SDF executive and heavily involved with the agitation for free school meals, but he operated through the local Socialist Society rather than an SDF branch. Ben Turner of Batley, trade union organiser and later ILP member, joined the Federation in 1886 after a visit to London to witness an unemployed demonstration. He was an isolated individual however, whose chief Socialist contacts were with the Leeds Socialist League in its anarchist phase, and he was an atypical SDF member, far to the right of the party in much of his thinking. Turner was probably involved in attempts to propagandise Huddersfield in

1887 and 1888⁴ but nothing came of it, whilst a more concerted effort to intervene in the Yorkshire miners' strike in 1885 met with similar results. The miners' agent at Denaby Main colliery reported that the fear of victimisation was too strong to permit the formation of an SDF branch.⁵ There is no great mystery about the failure of the Federation to make inroads into Yorkshire in these early years. Quite simply, it could not afford to send organisers and lecturers to the county on a regular basis. The party was perennially short of money and suffered from a chronic lack of speakers; those it had were heavily over-committed and branches were continually complaining to Justice about the failure to provide them with propagandists. In such circumstances resources had to be concentrated where inroads had already been made or where the outlook appeared most promising. Yorkshire at this time, outside the mining districts, proved a difficult area for trade union organisers let alone Socialist agitators. Turner remembered Bradford as 'the most heartbreaking district for Trade Union organising that ever I came across',⁶ and reflected that 'the soul of Leeds never seemed to be aroused'.⁷ In his autobiography, About Myself, he recalled the great difficulties that he and Allen Gee experienced organising unions in the textile areas of West Yorkshire.

The first major effort at expansion in Yorkshire came in the early 1890s. Probably at the behest of Jonathan Taylor the SDF held its Annual Conference at Sheffield in 1891, with the obvious intention of stimulating the movement in the county.

A series of open-air meetings was held in the city and delegates also travelled to Halifax to address a crowd of over 2,000. This propaganda proved singularly unsuccessful and the attempted branch in Sheffield soon fell through. However, the SDF Executive was clearly determined to gain a foothold in Yorkshire. Justice had displayed considerable interest in the Manningham Mills strike of 1890-91 and in the subsequent growth of Labour Unions in Bradford and neighbouring towns. It drew the conclusion that there

the class war manifests itself daily on the field of industrial organisation. There the workers could at any moment lay hands upon factories, mines, works and railways, and the capitalists would not have the ghost of a chance of successfully resisting them. What is needed now is further education and most thorough organisation [for] there is an immense amount of what may be called floating Socialism....⁸

Later in the year the SDF journal bewailed the lack of funds to enable organisers to be sent to Yorkshire,⁹ but the party's expansion in neighbouring Lancashire finally provided the opportunity. It was announced that A. G. Wolfe, the Burnley organiser, would commence a Yorkshire propaganda tour in January 1893.

Wolfe conducted 27 meetings in Yorkshire during the first six months of that year, visiting the major centres of Bradford, Huddersfield and Sheffield, the textile towns of the Heavy

Woollen District and outlying areas such as Barnoldswick, Earby and Skipton. Initial results were again discouraging and at the Annual Conference that year Wolfe's failure was excused on the grounds that he had been forced to stay in Lancashire due to the bad weather and rationalised as a consequence of the fact that the county was a new area for propaganda. The real reason was, once again, the lack of finance,¹⁰ but eventually Wolfe's persistence paid dividends. Having visited Sheffield for a week in September a branch was formed, and it proved so successful that in November Wolfe was appointed permanent organiser. In December 1893 an Earby branch was announced and January of the following year saw the reformation of the Leeds branch with Will Page, an ex-Walworth and Salford stalwart, playing a leading role. Yet Sheffield was the undoubted star in the SDF firmament. Under Wolfe's tutelage it proudly claimed 178 members by March 1894, and the original Central branch was soon boosted by offshoots at Ecclesall, Attercliffe and Heeley. Such success proved illusory, for in June of that year Wolfe was dismissed as organiser 'for indiscreet behaviour.'¹¹ He defected to the ILP and took most of the Sheffield membership with him. The reasons for this rupture are unclear but the events demonstrate all too clearly the vicissitudes of the Socialist movement. As an organiser in Lancashire Wolfe had been accused by Keir Hardie of trying to split the ILP in Accrington and other towns and convert the branches to the SDF. He had replied that Lancashire was an SDF centre and that he would not have acted thus in Yorkshire,

whilst defending his right to propagandise for the Federation wherever he wished.¹² Quite obviously the situation had been reversed in Sheffield, where the ILP had made determined efforts to woo over this Federation stronghold in its midst. There were also personal difficulties reminiscent of Tom Mann's problems in Bolton.¹³ Wolfe complained of 'S.D.F. intolerance and jealousy' and accused the SDF of dismissing him 'practically to gratify Hyndman's spite'.¹⁴ Whatever the truth of the matter only the Heeley branch survived, but the Federation obviously retained some hold on the minds of many Sheffield Socialists, for, at the School Board elections in November, there was strong criticism of the ILP District Committee for supporting the president of the Trades Council rather than Wolfe, and it was reported that the SDF regained many members.¹⁵ For the remainder of the decade the branch maintained a somewhat erratic existence. Jonathan Taylor was elected to the provincial section of the Executive in 1896 but it was found necessary to re-establish the branch in 1899. As Justice accurately commented: 'The S.D.F. has had a good many tries to found a strong branch at the latter important town but, although successful for a time, the branch has not kept going.'¹⁶

The problems in Sheffield were symptomatic of the problems in Yorkshire as a whole. Just as in the 1880s the SDF had been pre-empted by the Socialist League so in the 1890s it found itself confronted by the ILP. When the Federation made its first concerted effort to establish a Yorkshire base, in 1893, it found the ILP already in the field. The Independent

Labour Party's founding conference had been held at Bradford and Yorkshire was its major stronghold. Its ethical Socialism had proved a powerful attraction to the remnants of the Socialist Leaguers, and its policy of an alliance with the trade unions appealed to such as Fred Jowett, Tom Maguire and Willie Drew, active in the new unions which had sprung up in Leeds, Bradford and elsewhere. Thus, of 120 delegates to the Bradford conference 48 came from Yorkshire and two years later the county could boast 102 of the 305 ILP branches. Consequently the SDF found itself with a lack of political space in which to operate. This problem was exacerbated by its reputation as an anti-trade union body. ILP success in West Yorkshire was due largely to its connection with the unions. As Laybourn and Reynolds have pointed out, although many of the pioneers of the movement were Socialists it started 'as a movement of Labour Unions'.¹⁷ Furthermore, 'What transformed the small Socialist societies of the 1880s into a burgeoning Labour movement was the support which came from trade unions and trades councils'.¹⁸ E. P. Thompson has also pointed out the connection between the Trades Councils and the ILP.¹⁹ The SDF, suspicious of the unions doubtful of their efficacy as a vehicle for working-class aspirations, and with no settled policy towards them prior to 1897, found itself without a ready audience for its message. Essentially the Social-Democratic Federation had arrived in Yorkshire too late; a more determined effort in the 1880s, when Yorkshire trade unionism outside the coalfields was extremely weak, might have produced better results. As it was the SDF

struggled to exist. The West Yorkshire ILP was the stronghold of opposition to the idea of Socialist Unity after 1895, most branches agreeing with Hardie that the Federation was 'out of touch and harmony with the feelings and ideas of the mass of the people.'²⁰ The Bradford Labour Echo commented sarcastically of the proponents of Socialist Unity, 'May their shadows never grow less until this time of bliss arrives.'²¹

The SDF achieved its strongest presence initially in precisely those areas where trade unionism was weaker and the ILP consequently less influential. It maintained a base in Leeds, with some 40 members in 1895, and gained a second branch there when the Armley Fabian Society came over as a body. A third branch was formed at New Wortley in September of that year. In Dewsbury the Federation was able to topple the ILP position. Elsewhere small branches at Hull, Bingley and Low Benthall lived a somewhat precarious existence, very often composed of disillusioned ILPers who were nonetheless forced to relate to that body. Thus it was reported that a branch was to be formed in Halifax because the ILP 'needs a little backbone'.²² The Bradford members, upon the formation of their branch in August 1895, wished to 'Let comrades of the I.L.P. of Bradford understand that this branch of the S.D.F. has not been started antagonistic to the I.L.P.'²³

The Bradford branch was founded by Comrade Tungate, who had arrived from Coventry in search of work, and it commenced operations with only six members. One of its first initiatives

was to support Fred Jowett of the ILP in his election campaign for the Manningham Ward, where the Labour Echo reported that the SDF branch was working 'with a heartiness that does credit to the members.'²⁴ The branch met every Wednesday in the Central Coffee Tavern on Tyrrel Street, following the tradition of the early Bradford Socialists who had similarly eschewed licensed premises. They aimed a shrewd barb at the ILP when they reported that 'We do not intend to start a drinking club for the purpose of getting members',²⁵ but such convictions did not make it any easier to gain recruits. After some six months the branch claimed only 28 members, although this included Mrs Nott, a Labour Guardian, and was still entirely reliant on visiting speakers for propaganda. Hyndman came to Bradford in February 1896 and again in October whilst Chatterton, the national organiser, visited in July and September. It was almost a year after the branch's inauguration that it held its first open-air meetings, with J. Hunter Watts lecturing in the market place on 'How the Workers are Robbed' and 'The Duty of Revolt'.²⁶ As the branch secretary reported, they lacked both the speakers and the funds necessary to mount an outdoor propaganda campaign.²⁷ Their activities consisted almost entirely of indoor lectures and study classes, the members discussing Hyndman's Economics of Socialism and forming both historical and ethical sections. Not surprisingly recruitment was slow, and even Hunter Watts' forays produced only two new members. It was indeed 'a stiff fight', which bred in the Bradford members a feeling of superiority in the face of

adversity; they regarded the struggle as 'a kind of purifier that keeps all that is worth keeping and throwsoff all that is useless'.²⁸ Chatterton commented in similar vein that

The Bradford S.D.F. is not so strong (numerically) as some other branches, but it is solid to the backbone, and is composed of real live Socialists who are worth any number of the other sort.²⁹

Solid it may have been but a branch averaging only 15 members during its first brief existence and unable to publicise itself effectively could not hope to compete with an ILP membership of 2,000. The SDF had no figures of real stature in Bradford. Charles Glyde had been a member of the Federation since 1887 but he was more heavily involved with the ILP and as an organiser for the Gasworkers and General Labourers' Union. Tungate, the original driving force behind the branch, left Bradford early in 1896 and his successor as secretary, W. J. Simmonds, was also forced to leave the city in search of work. This dispersion of its most active members, coupled with increasing disillusionment in the face of repeated setbacks, caused the collapse of the branch at the end of 1897. Elsewhere in Yorkshire the outlook was similarly bleak. Of the three Leeds branches only Armley maintained an active existence, and it struggled to stabilise the membership, with the secretary reporting a shortage of local speakers and bemoaning the fact that the branch was losing members because they were so heavily involved in trade union activities.³⁰

Low Bentham, Skipton and Sheffield branches clung tenuously to life until mid-1898 and then they too collapsed. Those who were sympathetic to the SDF undoubtedly followed the example of W. P. Redfern of Huddersfield, who reported that he had joined the ILP for want of any viable alternative and hoped eventually for unity between the parties.³¹ That seemed an unlikely prospect in Yorkshire, where the SDF appeared doomed to failure. Yet there was one exception to this gloomy scenario. In Dewsbury, where a branch had been formed in February 1897, the Social-Democratic Federation mounted an authentic challenge to the Independent Labour Party.

Dewsbury, little more than a small village at the end of the eighteenth century, expanded rapidly during the nineteenth century due to the growth of the textile industry and, more specifically, the invention of shoddy. A temporary slump in the industry in mid-century was followed by a boom period in the 1860s and 1870s, when the spectacular growth of the woollen trade was accompanied by the development of engineering and coal mining to serve the staple industry. Dewsbury's rapid industrialisation brought inevitable social instability. The area was a centre of Luddite activity and a focal point of the anti-Poor Law agitation of the 1830s. Fears of a Chartist rising caused troops to be stationed in the town throughout 1840 and they were needed again in 1842 to quell the so-called 'Plug Riots'.

Dewsbury then had a radical tradition, and this remained a potent factor in the town even after it gained parliamentary representation in 1867. The charter incorporating Dewsbury as a borough was granted on 11 April 1862 in recognition of the town's rapid growth during the nineteenth century. The parliamentary borough consisted of Dewsbury, Batley, Soothill, Ravensthorpe and parts of Thornhill. At the first election for the borough local Liberals nominated Handel Cossham, a Bristol Nonconformist and Radical, but his nomination met with considerable opposition. Even at this early date the Trades Council, formed in the early 1860s, made its mark on local politics for at a meeting at the Royal Hotel they pledged to work for the return of Ernest Jones. Initially Jones agreed to stand but he later withdrew and his supporters thereupon invited Mr Serjeant Simon. The contest became a bitter struggle between the two Liberals, with local Tories openly supporting Simon. This division in the Liberal camp continued until 1885 and is largely explicable as a power struggle within the party between a ruling clique and those who were opposed 'to the complete domination of the borough's affairs by a few who only desired to perpetuate their own position'.³² The Trades Council intervention was prompted by dislike of Cossham, an outsider, and antipathy towards the local Liberal élite, feelings which similarly manifested themselves some 40 years later when Walter Runciman stood as Liberal candidate in the 1902 by-election and was opposed by Harry Quelch of the SDF. Cossham was narrowly defeated and Serjeant Simon

became Dewsbury's M.P. for the next 20 years, fighting off a gradually more organised Tory party and opposition from within the Liberal ranks. Simon eventually reconciled the split in the Liberal party by adopting certain radical proposals, such as Church disestablishment and the local option, which he had earlier condemned.

The key factor in the Liberal hold on the constituency was the strength of Nonconformity, which dominated the religious, social and political life of the town. Allied to this was a pervasive temperance movement committed to total abstinence, which remained a dominant force in local politics throughout the century. A third factor was the Irish vote. Traditionally bitterly opposed to the Nonconformists the Irish regularly voted for the Liberals, despite the efforts of the Catholic hierarchy to prevent this because of Radical opposition to church schools. This was, of course, simply explained. The immigrant community saw itself as Irish first and Catholic second, and supported the radical Liberals who promised Home Rule for Ireland. They comprised one-tenth of the electorate and delivered an estimated 1,100 votes to Simon in the 1886 election. Both then and later, at the by-election of 1888 caused by Simon's resignation and again in 1892, Dewsbury ran counter to national trends in registering a consolidated Liberal vote. As Simon's successor, Mark Oldroyd, commented in 1888:

Dewsbury has again spoken and with a distinct

voice has declared for Home Rule. You have again proved that we have in this parliamentary borough a citadel and a stronghold of Liberalism which no combination of enemies can assail.³³

The Liberal hegemony in Dewsbury would prove a daunting obstacle for Labour, but it bred a complacency which exposed it to criticism and eventually outright opposition from organised labour. This complacency was exemplified by Mark Oldroyd, a well-known and respected local manufacturer, owner of 'the largest woollen cloth manufactory in the world',³⁴ who was at the time of his election current mayor of Dewsbury. Oldroyd was regarded as something of a model employer and was a man of progressive opinions, favouring Home Rule, one man one vote, the payment of M.P.s, land reform and the control of licensing hours. His address for the 1892 election called for the more direct representation of wage earners in Parliament. Yet in Dewsbury, as elsewhere in the West Riding of Yorkshire, the dominant Liberal clique had ignored the trade unions, whilst Oldroyd had courted trouble with the Yorkshire Miners by voting against the Eight-Hour Day. Working-class resentment was expressed in 1895 with the appearance of an ILP candidate, Edward Robertshaw Hartley, at the hustings. Hartley's platform was very similar to that of Oldroyd, for his candidature signalled a repetition of the earlier splits in the Radical camp, which were now reflected in the contest between a Liberal manufacturer and a Labour candidate.

There had been trade unionism in the Heavy Woollen District for over 100 years. 'It died in the 'thirties, reared its head again in the 'forties, slept in the 'fifties, and began again in the 'sixties.'³⁵ The first Trades Council, formed in the 1860s, sent a statement to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Trade Unions; the Council believed in conciliation and arbitration, and also played a role in the first election for the parliamentary borough of Dewsbury. Trade unionism was, however, a weedy growth in the textile districts during the 1870s and 1880s. The Weavers' Association was forced to amalgamate with the Huddersfield and District Power Loom Weavers' Association in 1883 after a strike at Mark Oldroyd's mill had been soundly defeated. The resurgence of trade unionism in the early 1890s was in large measure due to the indefatigable energy of Ben Turner. He called the meeting which led to the formation of the second Trades Council in August 1891 and was also responsible for the inauguration of the Heavy Woollen branch of the Power-Loom Weavers' Association in January 1892. Turner was similarly involved with the Batley Independent Labour Party, which commenced operations in January 1893, and he was a delegate to the founding conference of the ILP in Bradford. In October 1893 Keir Hardie spoke in Dewsbury, with Turner on the platform, and one month later an ILP branch was formed at Thornhill Lees and the Dewsbury

Independent Labour Association was founded with J. S. Cooper, a local auctioneer, as president. Interestingly, in the same month, A. G. Wolfe of the SDF lectured to the Dewsbury Fabian Society on 'The Eight-Hour Question and the Textile Trades'. Almost inevitably Turner was at this meeting too.

The emergence of the Dewsbury ILP was undoubtedly linked with the resurgence of trade unionism; as elsewhere in the West Riding the Trades Council predated the ILP and activists such as Turner were instrumental in bringing the two together. There was in Dewsbury too a resentment at the exclusion of the working class from the Liberal caucus, contrary to Mark Oldroyd's published statements. This was clearly exhibited by the secretary of the Soothill Liberal Association who, upon his resignation from that body, emphasised that 'he attached more importance to the Labour party than anything else and with him it was labour first and Liberalism after.'³⁶ Although the Liberal Party was doing most of what he wanted, he said, he couldn't support some Liberals. Oldroyd's opposition to the Eight-Hour Day similarly antagonised trade unionists. The Dewsbury ILP began by using the textile workers club, but by February 1894 it had moved to clubrooms in Foundry Street. Only four months later it moved again, to rooms in Tithe Barn Street just off the market place. This move was necessitated by the rapid expansion of the ILP in the area. Branches now existed at Thornhill Lees, Ravensthorpe, Batley, and Dewsbury, and Tithe Barn Street was intended to be the Central Club for the ILP District Federation. By

November 1894 the Central Club boasted 300 members, Thornhill Lees 200, Ravensthorpe 200³⁷ and Batley 160.³⁸ The ILP could also acclaim early electoral success; running in tandem with the Trades Council it had three members on the Town Council, one on the Dewsbury Board of Guardians, one on the Earlsheaton Board, two on the Thornhill Urban Council, one on the Ravensthorpe Urban Council, and Turner had been elected to the Batley Council. As Turner later commented, 'The Tithebarn Street days, like the Foundry Street Days, were days of much progress and fire'.³⁹

This picture of early progress was, to a certain extent, misleading for support from the Trades Council for a Labour/Socialist alliance was not automatically forthcoming. It was reported in July 1893 that there was considerable controversy at the Trades Council meeting, with some delegates arguing that the Council should be non-political. More than a year later James Farnhill protested at the ILP rule that one could not be a member of a body other than the ILP and he subsequently stood as a Liberal candidate in opposition to the Trades Council/ILP candidate.⁴⁰ During 1895 the iron-founders, weavers, and engineers actually withdrew from the Trades Council because they objected to the introduction of politics onto that body. Nonetheless, it was agreed to put forward a Labour candidate at the next general election.⁴¹ Yet dissatisfaction was not limited entirely to the trade union side. Cooper, the Dewsbury ILP president, declined

the invitation to stand for parliament as a 'trade union and collectivist' candidate because, he protested, he was a Socialist and only under that banner would he consent to be nominated.⁴² The Dewsbury ILP, at a Yorkshire conference some two months earlier, had supported a proposal to change the party's name to that of National Socialist Party, with Cooper arguing that the title of Independent Labour Party deterred middle-class men like himself who were good Socialists. His view of the party's aims obviously went far beyond the mere pragmatism of electioneering; he talked of a 'Merrie England' where Socialists would 'love one another' and 'make other people happy'.⁴³

These strains within the alliance were exacerbated by increasing Liberal-pressure. The Dewsbury Reporter, having condemned the ILP candidate at Leicester for splitting the radical vote and handing victory to the party of reaction, warned the Trades Council that to support a candidate in Dewsbury would produce a similar result. Mark Oldroyd also launched an attack on Socialism⁴⁴ and, whilst professing sympathy for the ILP's aim of promoting workers' interests, urged those workers to vote for him as the man best able to fight for those interests.⁴⁵ The result was a divided Labour movement. As the Ossett Labour Club reported, there wasn't 'that harmony on labour matters that used to prevail'.⁴⁶ The Trades Council had second thoughts about its decision to put forward a candidate and the ILP decided, barely a week before the poll, to nominate Hartley.

Hartley was a Bradford butcher, an ex-Wesleyan activist who had been converted to Socialism at the age of thirty. He came to prominence in Bradford politics in the early 1890s, at a time of severe unemployment, was a founder member of the Bradford Labour Union and Ben Tillet's election agent in West Bradford at the 1892 election. His election address in Dewsbury in 1895 began thus:

Fellow Workers, you are again called upon to exercise the right of the franchise won for you at the cost of so much sacrifice on the part of your forefathers. Your right to vote implies your equal right to return to Parliament a representative of the majority of the masses rather than of the classes.

Hartley's programme included Home Rule for Ireland, abolition of the House of Lords, payment of M.Ps, the Eight-Hour day for miners and the appropriation of unearned income. The ILP's main strength lay in Thornhill Lees and Ravensthorpe, amongst the glass-bottle workers and miners. It boasted 1,000 members in the borough, of whom 850 were on the electoral roll, and claimed that 500 miners had signed a voting pledge and 1,500 more could be relied upon. If those claims were true then obviously the Liberals were in trouble for the first time but the figures are questionable and Laybourn and Reynolds assess ILP membership in the borough at 800.⁴⁷ The ILP effort was concentrated on Thornhill, with Hartley emphasising that the working class could expect no favours from the two established parties. His hopes of success were dashed by the decision of

the Temperance Union and the Irish National League to plump for Oldroyd. Consequently Oldroyd again headed the poll but his majority was reduced to 1,500, with the ILP gaining over 1,000 votes or 10.4 per cent of the poll.⁴⁸

The reasons for the ILP's comparative failure were understandable. It had entered the contest late and, as the Dewsbury and District News reported, had not posted a single printed injunction although it had circulated a few handbills.⁴⁹ In common with many Labour candidates Hartley had faced severe financial difficulties when compared to his opponents. Labour supporters, for example, had to walk to the polls whereas Conservatives and Liberals were provided with carriages. Victimization was also apparent, with reports of sackings for some Hartley supporters.⁵⁰ A significant factor was the organisation of the Irish vote for Liberalism, which deprived the ILP of potential supporters. At an Irish National League meeting in Dewsbury shortly after the election Irish voters were urged 'not to allow the shallow principles of the I.L.P. nor clerical circulars to turn them aside from the straight path that led to Irish freedom', and the ILP was described as 'the Enemy of Home Rule'.⁵¹ Both Liberal and Irish spokesmen accused the ILP of endangering Home Rule by letting in the Tories.⁵² Such propaganda had considerable effect and in the municipal elections of November 1895 the ILP fared badly, with the Irish vote a significant factor in its failure.⁵³ The Trades Council had also stepped back from a confrontation with

Liberalism and it was now reported that the Council 'did not mix with politics'.⁵⁴ The final factor was that outside Thornhill the Independent Labour Party's strength was not as significant as it had first appeared. It claimed 500 members in Dewsbury in 1895 but, as Ben Turner later recalled, 'The ties were slender that bound many to Labour. The rope of sand parted and the Tithebarn Street political centre disappeared between beer, extravagance of policy and jugglery of personages.'⁵⁵ Turner, echoing a complaint common amongst many Socialist activists in the 1890s, blamed the introduction of alcohol into the ILP clubs for many of the movement's shortcomings. He argued that some members joined simply for the social activities and implied that the political impulse which had originated the clubs was submerged. Whilst the political activity of the ILP in Thornhill Lees continued unabated, Turner's argument had some validity in Dewsbury. Within two years of the election the ILP branch had disappeared, to be replaced by a branch of the Social-Democratic Federation. Certainly the SDF was not as temperance-minded as the ILP but the drink issue was not a significant factor in this turn of events. The key lies in Turner's somewhat embittered reference to 'extravagance of policy and jugglery of personages'. Before looking at these events however the lessons of the ILP's election campaign of 1895 must be noted.

The fledgling organisation in fact polled creditably for a first attempt, but it faced an uphill struggle. Initially, a shortage of finance meant a consequent lack of organisation -

insufficient canvassers, printed material, transport and the like. For the next decade at least the two established parties possessed a major advantage in this respect. The solid Irish vote for Liberalism deprived Hartley of a potential constituency, in spite of the fact that the ILP and later the SDF possessed impeccable Home Rule credentials. The accusation that the third party would open the way for Tory success was difficult to refute and undoubtedly deterred many working men, Irish or no, from transferring their allegiance from the Liberals. The failure to present a solid ILP/Trades Council front was also significant for the future. A Liberal counter-attack had severely weakened ILP influence on the Trades Council but, equally importantly, had caused many to question the legitimacy of Trades Council involvement in politics. Conversely a number of ILPers were unhappy about the Labour alliance strategy pushed by Ben Turner, seeing it as a dilution of Socialist principles, and their doubts were intensified by such Trades Council prevarication. They would be amenable to SDF persuasion and a more forthright Socialist stance. How then did the Social- Democratic Federation come to Dewsbury?

In January 1896 a Socialist public meeting in Dewsbury market place was attended by J. R. Widdup of Wigan. This was by no means Widdup's first appearance in Yorkshire. He had, for example, chaired a Hyndman meeting in Leeds at the end of 1894.⁵⁶

As editor of the Burnley SDF's newspaper he was in demand on the speaker's circuit and obviously impressed local ILPers, for in February 1895 the Dewsbury and Thornhill branches agreed to engage him for 'propagandist work in Dewsbury and district'.

⁵⁷ As Tom Myers, secretary of the Thornhill Lees ILP, later recalled, so successfully did Widdup operate that 'he organised three branches out of existence'.⁵⁸ Yet initially he seems to have galvanised the ILP into action. The club at Tithebarn Street played host to speakers of the calibre of Keir Hardie and Enid Stacy, lectures were given to the local Co-operative Society, a trading department was established - much to the consternation of local tradesmen - and Widdup himself lectured throughout the Heavy Woollen District. That all was not well soon became apparent. The Trades Council protested at the ILP's plan to hold a May Day demonstration on the first Sunday in May in opposition to their own, and felt it necessary to emphasise the clear distinction between the two bodies. Trade Unionists in the ILP were rebuked for allowing non-trade-unionists to take over.⁵⁹ A meeting of the Yorkshire ILP Federation in April reported trouble in Dewsbury and decided to investigate, but quite clearly it was too late for in June of the same year the branch changed its name to the Dewsbury and District Socialist Society. The Dewsbury Reporter was quite happy to comment that 'The Independent Labour Party is not so active in the Heavy Woollen District as it used to be.'⁶⁰

Widdup's influence had obviously been instrumental in subverting the ILP position in Dewsbury, and this was borne out by the formation of a branch of the SDF in the town in

February 1897. His activities demonstrate the impact that one man could have on a locality. Widdup in Dewsbury, Wolfe in Sheffield, Tungate in Bradford had all been influential, to a greater or lesser extent, on the Socialist movement in these localities, and throughout the county branches of both the SDF and ILP emerged, collapsed, or changed direction dependent on the personality and philosophy of an individual or a small group of activists. In Dewsbury, however, there had been earlier pointers to these events: the support of the Dewsbury ILP for a change in the party's name, Turner's reflection on the fragile nature of ILP support in the town, and the obvious scepticism of some ILPers as to the value of trade unions. For a while the Socialist Society and the Federation co-existed as separate political entities, whilst the ILP sent Tom Taylor of Barnsley to Dewsbury in April 1897 in an attempt to rebuild the branch. He found a few ex-members willing to re-organise but was forced to report that the ILP had 'been thrown back for some time'.⁶¹ Any revival in the party's fortunes was certainly only temporary, for in May of the following year the Socialists in Dewsbury reacted to the breakdown of the Socialist unity negotiations between the ILP and the SDF with this announcement:

It was seen by the members of the S.D.F. and of the I.L.P. Club that the fact of two organisations being in existence was a drawback to the general Socialist Movement and a meeting of delegates from each body was held.⁶²

These delegates decided to form two sections, a social club which all should join and which would continue to be named the Dewsbury Socialist Society, and a propaganda section which would be a branch of the Social-Democratic Federation; membership of this would be voluntary, but the Society would be financially responsible for the work carried on by the SDF. In fact the SDF had worked assiduously to stabilise its base in Dewsbury. Chatterton, the national organiser, visited the town in May 1897 along with Lorenzo Quelch. W. G. Pearson of the London Trades Council was sent to propagandise in July and thought Dewsbury an ideal centre for Socialism, even suggesting that the Federation appoint a permanent organiser. In September F. Willis arrived for a week's tour, speaking at Dewsbury, Birstall, Thornhill and Ossett. Other visitors included Will Thorne, Joe Shufflebotham of Bolton, Penlington of Rochdale, and Dan Irving of Burnley. Such a concentration of speakers was remarkable for, as Justice bemoaned, there were only 14 to cover 40 branches in Lancashire and Yorkshire.⁶³ Dewsbury was the jewel in the SDF crown as far as Yorkshire was concerned and Chatterton reported that 'The Dewsbury S.D.F. hold as successful outdoor meetings on an average, as any branch in the country.'⁶⁴

The ready audience for the SDF in Dewsbury in 1897 and 1898 could be explained by the depression in the textile industry. Trade had been 'worse during the past twelve months than for many years',⁶⁵ and many mills were on short time as

the McKinley tariff hit local industry hard. Events outside Dewsbury similarly conspired to make trade unionists politically aware. Harry Broome, ex-soldier and now dyer and a prominent SDFer in these early years, had argued against Trades Council involvement with politics in 1896.⁶⁶ Now however, 'After the engineers' smash up...he thought they would be a political party'.⁶⁷ Broome could not understand why, after industrial defeats of this magnitude, at election time 'the men simply sent the master back to Parliament',⁶⁸ and he now accepted that the Eight-Hour day would come through legislation and not via the unions. At a time when political meetings fulfilled the role of mass entertainment the Dewsbury Socialists provided a succession of speakers with a readily understood message. They had taken control of the market place on Sundays, with meetings at 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m., much to the chagrin of other organisations who found themselves relegated to a secondary position.⁶⁹ Penlington of Rochdale spoke on 'The Capitalist Tree illustrated by its fruits', with illustrations provided on a blackboard. Chew, also of Rochdale, promised a future utopia for

It was the endeavour of the Social-Democratic Federation to give the people the land and the wealth of the land. When they replaced capitalist monopoly by collective control they would be able to realise that life was worth living; they would be able to give birth to a noble manhood.⁷⁰

Will Thorne and Dan Irving on the other hand urged the workers of Dewsbury to join their trade unions, Irving saying that 'they must be organised if they meant to grapple successfully with the evils attached to labour.'⁷¹ These sentiments would have been welcomed by Ben Turner who, at this time, had no objections to sharing a platform with SDF speakers. He obviously recognised the more pragmatic approach towards trade unionism adopted at the SDF's annual conference in 1897, whilst Will Thorne was a well known and respected union organiser. Moreover, as the SDF was the only functioning Socialist organisation in Dewsbury Turner, both as Trades Council secretary, and local ILPer, was forced to relate to it. He perhaps retained a residual affection for the party as a result of his membership in the late 1880s. The Federation also catered for the social life of its members. The branch had moved to new premises in the Socialist Hall on Wakefield Road at the end of 1897 and there lantern shows were held, Christmas teas and socials, where songs and mandolin solos were heard, and in 1899 an Easter Festival with over 100 present. 'The Society is now in a very flourishing condition',⁷² reported the secretary and the SDF Executive obviously agreed, regarding Dewsbury as 'a place which affords unique opportunities for effective Socialist propaganda'.⁷³

The SDF's concentration on Dewsbury was understandable, given its precarious position elsewhere in Yorkshire. Only Leeds maintained a stable existence, the Armley branch being

bolstered by the formation of a Central Leeds branch, although the Sheffield and Hull branches were reformed during 1899. Executive enthusiasm certainly afforded the Dewsbury members unique opportunities as a constant stream of speakers visited the town. The branch was also fortunate to possess capable members of its own, able to propagandise via the market place and the local press. Harry Broome, Harry Wood, Friend Lister and Tolson Butterworth were all prominent in SDF activities. Yet large attendances at meetings and a high public profile did not necessarily signify a large membership. The SDF's membership figures have been notoriously difficult to assess, as P.A. Watmough has demonstrated,⁷⁴ and those of the Dewsbury branch are no exception. It was an erratic payer of dues and if one uses Watmough's method of calculation then Dewsbury never had more than 20 fee-paying members before the Quelch election campaign and often fewer than 10. Nevertheless reports from the Dewsbury Socialist Hall indicate frequent attendances of over 100, and the regularity and range of activities in the town compared with branches elsewhere suggest a larger membership. In 1896 the SDF had introduced a fund to pay the wages of Chatterton, the national organiser, assessed at 3d. per 25 members. This was later continued as the Secretary's Wages Fund. Dewsbury contributed to this rather more regularly than most branches and if averaged over the period from 1897 to 1900 its contributions would suggest a branch of some 50 members, this figure rising sharply in 1901 with the impetus of the election campaign. Tom Myers of the Thornhill Lees ILP,

no friend of the Federation, assessed its membership in Dewsbury as 40, a figure repeated by other ILPers.⁷⁵ With its periphery of social members at the Dewsbury Socialist Club the SDF was by no means a negligible political force, although obviously nowhere near the stature of the ILP in say Bradford or Halifax. Its isolation in Yorkshire was, however, demonstrated by the fact that it was forced to join the Lancashire District Committee of the Federation. Nonetheless it achieved some prominence in the town during 1900.

At a Trades Council meeting in May 1900 Tom Myers proposed 'That the Council convene a meeting, and invite representatives from the various Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies and Socialist bodies in the district, to consider the question of labour representation.'⁷⁶ He was supported by Ben Turner, who remarked that he was not in favour of opposing sound Labour men like Broadhurst but in Dewsbury there was no such Labour man. In all probability there would be a general election the following spring and if they were to act then steps should be taken as soon as possible. 'The Labour party had plenty of corners to rub off, and plenty of knots to remove. But the more tolerant they were the better it would be for them.'⁷⁷ Turner's attitude was significant. His references to Broadhurst and tolerance were indicative of his views on labour representation. He was not necessarily in favour of independent candidates, preferring a Lib-Lab where possible to avoid splitting the working-class vote. Turner's machinations and

his later antipathy towards the SDF were at the root of many of the subsequent problems. At the Trades Council meeting Myers and Turner were also backed by Lewis Gledhill of the Yorkshire Miners, an ex-ILPer, who had always put his trade unionism before his Socialism, but who now realised that 'They had fought the battles at election times on Trade Union lines and they had been defeated....They would be able to get justice if they had more working men representatives'.⁷⁸ Delegates unanimously agreed to invite Co-operative Societies, Friendly Societies and Socialist organisations to meet a delegation from the Trades Council, which included Myers of the ILP and Broome of the SDF. The Co-operative and Friendly Societies declined the invitation, the SDF and ILP accepted and, perhaps coincidentally, before the conference took place Harry Quelch made his first appearance in Dewsbury, speaking both at the Socialist Hall and at an open-air meeting in the market place.

The meeting was convened in the Spiritualist Meeting Room in Dewsbury on 7 August 1900, with representatives from the Trades Council, SDF, ILP, and the Batley Railway Servants in attendance. Mr. Fox of the Batley Co-operative Society attended as an observer. Throughout the debates Broome and Butterworth of the SDF were prominent. Broome felt strongly about 'the treatment meted out to working men in trade disputes' but echoed the standard SDF line in pointing out the cost to the unions of striking and argued that the money would be better spent on labour representation. In similar vein Butterworth used the engineers' lock-out as an

illustration of the fallacy of strikes. However, both men urged caution. Broome 'thought the question required careful consideration and did not wish to see the thing rushed at' whilst Butterworth thought that 'before they chose any man they should get to know his principles and what he was prepared to work for'.⁷⁹ The SDF was clearly afraid that a Lib-Lab would be foisted upon the constituency, and the contrast between their views and those indicated by Turner earlier pointed to later controversy. But at this meeting unanimity again prevailed and the conference constituted itself a committee to draw up a programme for a further meeting on 4 September.

The SDF was determined to maintain the momentum and, at a meeting some two weeks after the conference, Will Thorne appeared on the platform with Ben Turner to advocate Labour representation. Significantly Quelch also returned to Dewsbury on 2 September, lecturing on 'Social Reform and Social Democracy' and concentrating on the housing problem, a matter of considerable interest in Dewsbury at that time. Both he and Thorne eschewed revolutionary rhetoric for practical politics and clearly they were aiming for the selection of an SDF candidate. These plans came to nothing, for the unexpected dissolution of Parliament in September meant that 'the trade unionists and socialists of the district were absolutely unprepared as regarded a candidate...it would take too long to find the funds required.'⁸⁰ The Liberal Party could thus confidently expect to win Dewsbury once more, but they would

not be able to rely upon the wholehearted support of organised labour. Both the Trades Council and the Social-Democratic Federation sent questionnaires to Mark Oldroyd and the SDF challenged him to a debate, a challenge which he initially accepted. The ten questions put by the Trades Council gave an indication of the reason for their dissatisfaction with Oldroyd and Liberal policy. In his replies Oldroyd opposed the Eight-Hour Day for miners, nationalisation of the mines and railways, and the abolition of fines in mills and mines, which he thought would be injurious to discipline. Consequently, the Council could not 'see their way to recommend Trade Unionists to take any particular action in the forthcoming election.'⁸¹ This view was reinforced by a dislike of Oldroyd's outright support for the South African war, expressed on numerous occasions in the press and again in reply to the list of questions sent by the SDF.

In the absence of a Labour candidate it was inevitable that most working men would vote for Oldroyd, a view expressed by the president of the Dewsbury Moor Miners who argued that 'for a working-class constituency we could not possibly have a better man to represent us.'⁸² There was little opposition to the war locally and SDF anti-war meetings had been attacked and interrupted.⁸³ Oldroyd's Tory opponent, Forbes St. John Morrow, was an Irish-born London barrister but this carried little weight in a constituency where the Irish had consistently voted for Home Rule. Indeed the number of Irish voters had

increased due to the new practice of the landlord paying the rates and charging his tenants a gross rental. This could only work to Oldroyd's advantage and in the event he achieved his largest-ever majority.⁸⁴ The events of 1900 were significant because they demonstrated a clear determination on the part of the Trades Council Executive and the local Socialists to pursue a Labour candidature, and immediately after the election the SDF continued the attack. Harry Wood castigated Oldroyd for backing out of the debate, forecast the imminent demise of the Liberal Party, and warned Oldroyd that 'It is a fight to the end; yea, even unto death.'⁸⁵ The fight, when it came, was not quite what Wood had envisaged.

The SDF was exceedingly active in Dewsbury during the early months of 1901. Regular open-air meetings were held, visiting speakers including the veteran Chartist Sketchley and Quelch. In June the organising secretary of the Federation, J. Jones, held a month's mission in the area which was, according to Justice, the longest period any one organiser had ever spent in a single locality.⁸⁶ Members featured prominently in the letters columns of the local press, Wood indulging in a sustained attack on the church which he saw as lecturing the poor 'into docile submission to its master class',⁸⁷ and A. J. Bower lecturing readers on the principles of Social-Democracy.⁸⁸ The branch was recruiting new members who were to play prominent roles in its later history, men such as Harry Elkin, a potman on Dewsbury market, and George Kinsley who owned a grocer's shop. Financial support was provided by George Jessop,

a local tailor and Batley Liberal councillor of Radical views. The conviction of Oldroyd and Sons for breaches of the Factory Acts provided the SDF with an opportunity for propaganda which they were not slow to exploit. They circulated a pamphlet which Oldroyd had distributed to his workers, entitled Living Wage, a report of a lecture he had given to the Dewsbury Pioneers Industrial Society in 1894. Here Oldroyd had emphasised the need for young children to receive 'the inestimable blessings of their mother's fostering care' yet, as the SDF gleefully pointed out, he had now been fined for employing young boys after hours.⁸⁹ The Federation's impact was demonstrated by a worried member of the Liberal Party. 'There is a danger', he said, 'of taking things too much for granted. Our opponents are not asleep, but are busy sowing tares amongst the wheat.'⁹⁰ He advocated a more aggressive policy to combat the SDF. All in all the SDF in Dewsbury was in confident mood when, in September 1901, Mark Oldroyd announced his resignation on the grounds of ill-health.

The resulting Dewsbury by-election of February 1902 provoked a damaging split in the Labour movement and, when Harry Quelch's nomination for the SDF was announced, it caused both local and national controversy. ILP/LRC orthodoxy viewed the affair as yet another example of the SDF's unreliability, accusing it of 'positively bad faith'.⁹¹ Quelch's candidature was seen as 'a very lamentable and futile political escapade' which would

prove 'a very bad advertisement for Socialism in the West Riding of Yorkshire'.⁹² But damage to the Socialist cause was not necessarily their major concern. What worried the leaders of the ILP was the effect that Quelch might have on the emergent Labour Representation Committee. As Lib-Lab M.P. Richard Bell argued, the SDF's action was 'not at all conducive to the best interests of Labour Representation'.⁹³ The ILP portrayed the affair as convincing proof, if any proof were needed, that Socialist unity was not an alternative to Labour representation: 'the entire movement would be reduced to the impotence of the present S.D.F.', said Hardie.⁹⁴ Labour historians, most of whom accept the SDF as a minor and alien intrusion into the British Labour movement, have largely followed this line. Laybourn and Reynolds speak of 'The spurious claims of the SDF,' and accuse the Federation of pre-empting the issue in deciding to stand Quelch before negotiations between the ILP, the Trades Council, and the Federation had been concluded.⁹⁵ It is true that the SDF declared its candidate before the other organisations had reached a final decision, but it felt that it had valid reasons for doing so. ILP criticism of its actions was motivated primarily by events at national level which had little to do with the local issue. Nonetheless the Federation can justifiably be criticised on two counts. In many ways the Dewsbury controversy was reminiscent of the 'Tory Gold' affair, in that it was not so much what the party did that told against it but the way in which it was done. Secondly, the SDF can be accused of naivety in

expecting unqualified support from either local or national Labour leaders after its pre-emptive strike. What the by-election did demonstrate was that a Socialist candidate could inspire an enthusiastic response from rank and file ILPers and from the many unattached Socialists, particularly those connected with the Clarion movement. In 1901-02 the future of the Socialist movement in Britain was very much in the melting pot; it was far from certain that the Labour Representation Committee would succeed, even in its own limited aims, and many genuinely believed that an overtly Socialist party could achieve electoral success in the near future. There was already evidence that participation in a Labour alliance meant a watering down of Socialist commitment, and the Dewsbury contest clearly illustrates the tension between the two. To interpret the Social-Democratic Federation's intervention in Dewsbury in the light of later history merely perpetuates the stereotyped myth of sectarianism, but the events surrounding the election highlight the problems confronting the SDF in attempting to pose a Socialist alternative to the LRC. What then happened in Dewsbury between September 1901 and February 1902?

Mark Oldroyd's resignation was announced soon after the Social-Democratic Federation's decision to withdraw from the Labour Representation Committee. The ILP was furious at SDF accusations of treachery for its failure to support the

Socialist resolution at the LRC's founding conference, and it had already decided to have no close contact with the SDF executive. The Federation's departure from the LRC reinforced that decision, leading J. R. Clynes to comment that 'Minorities have their uses, but these methods only ensure a permanency for the minority without its even being useful'.⁹⁶ After the breakdown of unity negotiations in 1898 the two parties had pursued increasingly divergent courses. As early as 1901 the NAC of the ILP was unwilling to sanction contests in Liberal strongholds, and the LRC 'successes' in the general election of 1900 had occurred largely with Liberal support.⁹⁷ The concept of Socialist unity was now viewed with outright hostility and support for an SDF candidate in Dewsbury was therefore very unlikely.

The main charge against the SDF was that they had rushed Quelch on the constituency, pre-empting a meeting which was going to select a Labour/Socialist candidate. Local Labourites were certainly taken by surprise by Oldroyd's resignation, but discussions concerning a candidate for Dewsbury had been going on for over a year. There is ample evidence that the Trades Council was divided over the issue,⁹⁸ and the NAC of the ILP had decided, in the light of the Lanarkshire by-election result, that money could be spent more usefully than on another electoral contest. Whereas the local SDF had twice suggested Quelch as a candidate no other nominee had been forthcoming.

Dewsbury had never appeared on the official list of constituencies to be contested by the ILP at the next election,⁹⁹ although local branches were semi-autonomous in this respect. The possibility of a Socialist candidate for Dewsbury therefore seemed remote. There is no doubt that Ben Turner, Tom Myers and other leading local ILPers feared a split on the Trades Council if a Socialist were adopted, and they had therefore changed their attitude since the idea was first mooted in May 1900.¹⁰⁰ The SDF clearly feared that the Socialist and trade unionist candidate first proposed would now be replaced by a Lib-Lab man, but this accusation was dismissed. Yet the rubbishing of the SDF's fears were disingenuous to say the least. When Oldroyd announced his resignation the Trades Council and the ILP declared that they were considering running a candidate 'unless the Liberals adopt one holding advanced views on Labour questions'.¹⁰¹ This seemed a distinct possibility, for the local Liberal press supported the idea as a means of avoiding a dangerous three-cornered contest.¹⁰² Further Trades Council consultation elicited the names of Sam Woods, W. Steadman and George Thorpe, a local co-operator, but Woods, the Wigan Miners' agent, seemed the clear favourite.¹⁰³ Overtures were obviously made to him because he wrote to Herbert Gladstone, the Liberal chief whip, offering himself for nomination. Moreover, Keir Hardie advised in the Labour Leader that Woods should not be opposed by a Labour candidate in Dewsbury. There is clear evidence too that Ben Turner favoured Woods. Both he and Lewis Gledhill were reported to be opposed to a Labour contest,¹⁰⁴ a fact confirmed by Tom Myers after the election.¹⁰⁵

The situation in Dewsbury then reflected, in microcosm, events in the Labour movement nationally. It is explicable in terms of the hostility between the ILP and the SDF, and in terms of the increasing domination of the LRC by the trade unions at the expense of the Socialists. The SDF had ample reason to fear the selection of a Lib-Lab candidate and therefore, after initial hesitation, decided to nominate their own candidate, Harry Quelch. Their mistake was to do so before a final decision had been reached by the Trades Council and ILP. If Woods had been nominated the SDF could legitimately have opposed him with a Socialist candidate, although obviously without any claim to Trades Council support. As it was they laid themselves open to the charge of attempting to dictate to the local Labour movement its choice of candidate. However, this proved academic because the Dewsbury Liberals rejected Woods in favour of Walter Runciman, a Newcastle shipowner. This blatant disregard of Labour claims to representation obviously shocked the Trades Council and the ILP, who now searched for an alternative candidate. They fell back upon Edward Robertshaw Hartley, who had contested the seat for the ILP in 1895. Laybourn and Reynolds suggest that 'it was well known that the Trades Council and the ILP would support E. R. Hartley',¹⁰⁶ but his name was not mentioned officially until the Trades Council met on Tuesday 22 October and even then he was simply canvassed alongside Woods and Thorpe as a possible candidate. After Thorpe had declined the invitation, and after Woods had been vetoed by the Liberals, the Trades Council decided to nominate Hartley, with the support of the Thornhill Lees ILP.

The selection of Hartley, a well-known local Socialist, placed the SDF in a dilemma. He was, after all, an outspoken supporter of Socialist unity and critical of the Socialist alliance with the trade unions. If the Federation had stayed its hand until the Trades Council had reached a final decision they could have mounted a powerful joint campaign with Hartley in support of the Socialist alternative to the Labour alliance. Alternatively, if the SDF had remained within the LRC then Quelch might well have won the nomination. However, the die was cast and the SDF refused to withdraw in favour of Hartley, for Quelch's campaign had now been underway some six weeks. A combination of pride and obstinacy on the part of local SDFers, coupled with the always fervently held belief that they, and not the ILP, were the true Socialist party, ensured that Quelch would go to the polls. An LRC sub-committee was convened to discuss the matter, but the committee was heavily weighted against the SDF and the result of the hearing was a foregone conclusion.¹⁰⁷ The SDF was accused of rushing the matter and dismissed as a small body which had no right to pre-empt the Trades Council or ILP. The committee asked the SDF to withdraw their candidate but Lorenzo Quelch, in Dewsbury to organise his brother's campaign, refused. They were, he said, pledged to their executive and to the public, and had already received many subscriptions.

Temporarily there was the possibility of two Labour candidates in Dewsbury. Tom Myers said that the ILP would not withdraw Hartley as long as the Trades Council supported him,

and Keir Hardie predicted that if both men went to the poll Hartley would attract ten times more votes than Quelch.¹⁰⁸ But saner counsels prevailed. Owen Connellan, of the Leeds Trades Council, realised that the Socialists would cut a most ignominious figure at the poll if two candidates stood.¹⁰⁹ Glasier, for the NAC of the ILP, declared that they would take no further part in the election and he anticipated that the Thornhill Lees branch would loyally accept that judgement.¹¹⁰ Thereafter the ILP concentrated its attack in two areas. Interestingly, the accusation of undemocratic practice was now shelved in favour of a more straightforward argument that the ILP had been there first, that they had run a candidate in 1895 and that they had been responsible for the development of Socialism in the constituency. This was, of course, true but the 'first come' argument was a far more trivial one than the charges previously levelled against the SDF. In any case there had been no branch of the ILP in Dewsbury since 1896, so the SDF surely had as much right as the Thornhill Lees ILP to stand a candidate. The ILP had never previously concerned itself with electoral protocol, yet Philip Snowden's candidacy in Blackburn had received full SDF backing. Neither had the ILP always bowed to local Labour opinion in its choice of constituencies to contest, Pete Curran's ignominious failure at Barnsley in October 1897 being a case in point. Secondly, the ILP predicted 'a miserable and insignificant vote' for Quelch and prepared to blame the Social-Democratic Federation for the consequences.¹¹¹ It is difficult to avoid the

conclusion that the Independent Labour Party seized upon the by-election as an opportunity to inflict a damaging blow upon the SDF, whilst the LRC desperately tried to distance itself from the contest in order to establish the respectability of its credentials as a serious political party. Locally the Trades Council, led by Turner, followed suit. He announced that they could not support Quelch as 'he had not fulfilled the conditions of the Labour Representation Committee with which they were affiliated'.¹¹² There was an undoubted touch of hypocrisy in all this, for if they were seriously concerned at the possible repercussions of a derisory poll for Quelch then a concerted effort to rally behind him would seem to have been the answer. The ILP and Trades Council seemed more than happy to air their grievances publically. Consequently relations on the Trades Council became very strained and Jacks, the president, almost came to blows with Harry Broome, who threatened to 'speak to Mr. Jacks in the market place.'¹¹³

This dispute certainly demonstrated the isolation of the SDF after its withdrawal from the LRC, but it also showed the increasing tensions within the ILP consequent upon its affiliation to that body. Many Socialists were worried at a rumoured trend towards ILP/Liberal understandings in an attempt to get members into Parliament. Much to the chagrin of the ILP leaders Edward Hartley now announced his support for Quelch, complaining that 'The great work of the official section of the I.L.P. at the present seems not so much to push Socialism as to try and intrigue some half-a-dozen persons into

Parliament'.¹¹⁴ This, thought Hartley, could only be done at 'a terribly heavy price - more than we can possibly afford'.¹¹⁵ Events at Dewsbury disgusted him. He couldn't understand the hostility of Glasier and Hardie towards the SDF and obviously shared the view that there had been behind the scenes manoeuvring to intrigue a Lib-Lab into the seat. 'This must end', he said, or 'my connection must cease with a movement which for the sake of getting men into positions will forget all its past and all its principles.'¹¹⁶ Hartley had never been an enthusiastic supporter of the Labour alliance, preferring the unions to remain separate from the Socialist bodies. Speaking for Quelch at the Albert Hall in Dewsbury he also dismissed the idea that the ILP had the right to contest the constituency. 'He had the prior claim to Dewsbury and if he had not there was not another Labour man who had.'¹¹⁷ Glasier was outraged at Hartley's stance,¹¹⁸ but other ILPers obviously agreed with Hartley. Many branches wrote in to support Quelch, including those at Ossett and Huddersfield. The Huddersfield ILPers publically castigated the leadership for interfering with branch affairs in an attempt to rescind a pro-Quelch resolution.¹¹⁹ The Clarion also threw its weight behind the SDF candidate, seizing the opportunity once more to campaign for Socialist unity, and the local Clarion fellowship supported Quelch throughout. Many Socialists felt that the rights and wrongs of the matter were of little importance now; a successful Quelch campaign could strike a blow for British Socialism.

Quelch's campaign was inevitably hampered by the internecine warfare outlined above. The Liberal press dismissed him as a threat precisely for that reason.¹²⁰ Yet in spite of this handicap he performed very respectably indeed. His contest demonstrated both the strengths and weaknesses of SDF propaganda and showed that the SDF was not without appeal even in the most hostile of environments. It also provides an interesting insight into the world of the Socialist propagandist at the turn of the century.

The Federation sent Quelch's brother north soon after Oldroyd's resignation, to act as his organiser. A meeting at the Dewsbury Socialist Club on 10 October appointed a committee of six to oversee the campaign which Harry Quelch had launched in the market place four days earlier. He urged the workers of Dewsbury to be true to their class. The very fact that he was a Social-Democrat, he said, should be sufficient for him to claim the votes of the working classes. This was a commendable sentiment but a rather naive expectation in view of the soured relations between the SDF and other local Labour bodies. In an essentially moderate speech aimed at repairing the breach Quelch was at pains to emphasise that although the SDF wanted revolution they intended to use peaceable means, by gaining control of the political machinery of the country. Indeed throughout the election Quelch pushed a moderate enough

platform, a fact commented upon by the ILP.¹²¹ The usual SDF programme of nationalisation, support for the Eight-Hour Day, Home Rule, free and secular education and a minimum wage, was accompanied by demands for national housing legislation and public control of the liquor trade. There was little here to distinguish him from an extreme Radical. Surprisingly, in view of the fact that Runciman was a pro-war Liberal, the South African war did not figure largely in his speeches. He condemned the war as 'unjust, unnecessary and iniquitous',¹²² but emphasised that he was no 'Little Englander' - Quelch supported a democratic rather than an Imperial Federation. However, other than the distribution of the SDF's anti-war manifesto¹²³ little was done to bring the war to the forefront of the election campaign. At this time Hyndman and other leading figures in the SDF were drawing back from their openly anti-war stance, arguing that the anti-war campaign was a distraction from Socialist propaganda.¹²⁴

In classic SDF style Quelch combined a moderated programme with vitriolic rhetoric. He made long and bitter personal attacks on Oldroyd's record as M.P. which, in view of the latter's illness, was probably counter-productive. A particular target was the former M.P.'s conviction for working boys in contravention of the Factory Act, Quelch frequently repeating Oldroyd's declaration that 'he was prepared to go to prison, even to eat skilly; rather than surrender the right to sweat boys'. Oldroyd had meant this as a statement of principle against government intervention and Quelch's literal inter-

pretation cut little ice with workers who knew Oldroyd and Sons as paternal employers. Quelch also poured scorn on the very electors for whose votes he was appealing, castigating them for continually electing their masters to represent them. Speaking in Batley, he said that 'it was impossible to describe the mental development of any elector who would vote for such a man' as Runciman, who could not possibly 'benefit the class on whose poverty and misery he made his fortune.'¹²⁵ The Federation also placed great emphasis on the similarity of the Liberal and Tory parties. J. B. Hudson, a visiting speaker from Manchester, argued that 'Liberalism was organised hypocrisy. The Liberals and Tories were simply two parties of the same class who, whenever class or vested interests were at stake, would invariably be found rowing in the same boat together.'¹²⁶ Only the SDF provided a genuine alternative to the parties of capitalism, stressing as it did 'the intellectual, the moral and physical well-being of the people... a higher, nobler and richer life.'¹²⁷

Socialist rhetoric was matched by a determined effort to improve their organisation. The committee worked feverishly to push Quelch's campaign, booking the Albert Hall every Sunday for the holding of mass meetings. Hyndman, Cunningham Graham, W. M. Thompson the editor of Reynolds' Newspaper, William Gee the 'Socialist Dreadnought', Hartley and others were brought in to speak for Quelch. Henry Labouchere, Liberal M.P. for Northampton, wrote in support arguing that Quelch

offered more opportunity for those who wanted an end to the South African war than did Runciman. 15,000 copies of a Quelch biography, 5,000 circulars and 500 resumés of Hyndman's career were ordered for circulation. An attempt was also made to systematise canvassing, that perennial bugbear of SDF electoral hopes,¹²⁸ and in mid-December Dan Irving was brought in from Burnley to act as Quelch's election agent. The historian of Dewsbury parliamentary contests suggests that the SDF held few meetings and obtained little success¹²⁹ but this is far from the truth. The constituency was bombarded with literature and inundated with speakers, few days passing without a meeting of some description. Quelch himself was in Dewsbury for over a week in November, a similar period in December, and for much of January. Large crowds were attracted to his meetings¹³⁰ and those at the Albert Hall every Sunday were always well attended. As the campaign progressed it took on the nature of a crusade, both against the existing system and for Socialist unity, a point emphasised by many of those writing to support Quelch.¹³¹ There were, unfortunately, a number of obstacles to overcome if the Socialists were to convert moral fervour into votes.

The fact that leading ILP and LRC representatives, both locally and nationally, refused to support Quelch was an obvious handicap. The Thornhill Lees ILP even refused him the use of their rooms for a meeting although they accorded Runciman a similar privilege. Such events provided the Liberal press with an obvious propaganda coup. 'A man who wants to

turn the world upside down has begun his mission by hopelessly dividing the independent labour forces',¹³² gloated the Reporter, which made great play of the fact that 'local leaders were conspicuous by their absence'.¹³³ These attacks, which inevitably carried some weight, were matched by accusations of 'Tory Gold'. The Leeds and Yorkshire Mercury lambasted a supposed 'Socialist-Tory Entente', suggesting that it was not the first time that 'a so-called Socialist candidate' had found 'funds in some mysterious way to carry on a political campaign'.¹³⁴ The Liberals constantly warned electors that 'Every vote then given for Mr. Quelch will be a vote for the Tories'.¹³⁵ If Quelch was not attacked in the press then he was ignored, leading him to complain of 'wilful suppression' of his speeches.
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Quelch also found himself in trouble with local Nonconformists over his joint authorship, with Belfort Bax, of A New Catechism of Socialism. The passage which aroused particular ire was that which suggested that both money and marriage were the results of the capitalist social structure and would disappear with the abolition of private property. This was interpreted as an attack upon 'existing monogamic relations' and as an advocacy of free love. As one outraged reader of the Reporter protested, 'When purity and family life were destroyed it would be a bad day for this country'.¹³⁷ Such views would not have pleased the Catholic population. Already instructed by the Irish National League and the Irish M.Ps to vote for Runciman, any waverers would have been further

disturbed by the pronouncements of Quelch's most eccentric supporter, the Reverend H. M. Kennedy, Vicar of Plumpton. He had supported Runciman in his Oldham campaigns on the grounds that he was a Radical, but now argued that only shipowners should vote for him as they would be the only group to benefit from his election. Later he suggested that 'English people wanted their country to themselves and did not want the Paddies in their midst but the Paddies did not want to be on English soil if they would only give them their own country'.¹³⁸ Such comments made Kennedy an easy target for ridicule and did nothing to improve Quelch's chances, reflecting badly on their electoral strategy.

Quelch was thus handicapped by a divided Labour organisation, an Irish electorate which traditionally followed the instructions of its political leaders, and a hostile press. Organisationally too he was at a disadvantage. On nomination day he had only 'a mere handful of supporters' compared to the Liberals and Tories. The 53 Liberal and 22 Tory nomination papers were opposed by only three from the Socialist forces. Financially too he suffered. A balance of £8-13-1 at the end of November had shrunk to £1-19-6 by early December and collections were reportedly poor.¹³⁹ In spite of a successful fund-raising campaign organised via Justice the SDF found itself unable to make ends meet and unable to cope with the demands placed upon it. Lorenzo Quelch appealed desperately for help in organising Batley, where of course Ben Turner would have been invaluable, and on polling day it was reported that

Quelch's committee rooms 'had seemed deserted and he had no workers to speak of'.¹⁴⁰ Whilst the large crowds at his meetings were encouraging they could be misleading. The political meeting was an attraction regardless of the colours of the speaker, and all three candidates were supported by public votes at Thornhill Lees for example.¹⁴¹ Many of Quelch's listeners were 'young chaps' who were not entitled to vote, said one commentator, and certainly many potential supporters were disenfranchised. David Howell has estimated something like 4.8 million adult males were excluded from the register as late as 1910. A considerable number would have failed to register, a factor exacerbated by the SDF's lack of a full-time agent in the constituency. A survey in June 1900 had found that an electoral register of 13,296 contained only 24 lodgers. Many others were not eligible to vote. Ben Turner had noted that two thirds of the houses in Dewsbury and Batley were rated at less than £15 per annum and their occupants earning less than 28 shillings per week.

Understandably local Liberals were hugely confident at the beginning of the campaign. Quelch was dismissed as a serious threat and scarcely mentioned at the start of the campaign. Even at the beginning of January they felt that matters were only 'a little complicated' by the Socialist candidate. 'That gentleman can be left to the tender mercies of the I.L.P. and the Trades Council', declared the Reporter.¹⁴² It was felt that Liberal organisation had never been so complete, that an

overwhelming victory was assured. Yet as January progressed signs of alarm were increasingly evident. It was emphasised that a vote for Quelch would split the Radical vote and let in the Tory. Liberals were urged to turn out on the day and register their vote. Potential Socialist voters were shown that the Radical platform embraced all that was best in Socialism. Quelch was subjected to violent personal attacks, particularly for his supposed views on marriage; he was denounced as a 'dreamer and fanatic'. This sudden panic was a response to an unexpectedly efficient campaign by the Socialists, which was wooing many ILPers and Labour men back to the fold. The ILP News attacked those who were supporting Quelch 'in violation of the decision of the National Council and local branch',¹⁴³ but even the Thornhill Lees branch had rescinded its earlier decision and allowed Quelch to speak. A Trades Council meeting on 22 January showed clearly that, whilst many still resented the SDF's 'impolitic behaviour', a number of delegates were prepared to overlook that and register their votes for the Socialist candidate. The Dewsbury Trades Council was severely criticised at a meeting of Yorkshire Trades Councils a few days later and Turner was grudgingly forced to admit that Quelch was an 'able and upright man, and they had not one word to say against him.'¹⁴⁴ Runciman's hopes of a solid Labour vote in his favour seemed premature. Similarly there were signs of wavering in the Irish ranks. Michael Davitt had issued a circular supporting Quelch, in which he compared Ireland to South Africa. The assassins of Liberty in South Africa, he

said, 'whether Unionist or Liberal Imperialist will never offer to Ireland a measure of Home Rule worth our acceptance', and he attacked Runciman's support for the war. Davitt's influence may have been on the wane but his voice still carried some weight. This was particularly true in the Daw Green area of Dewsbury and at an Irish National League meeting Councillor McCann felt obliged to rebuke Davitt for his intervention, very much regretting that 'there was the slightest disposition to disregard the advice they got from Headquarters'.¹⁴⁵ Another speaker declared that he wished the INL executive had advised them to support Quelch. Much of the credit for this resurgent campaign must go to Quelch himself for he fought an exceptionally able contest, earning praise from both friend and foe. He and Hyndman demonstrated all the qualities of the Socialist pioneers.

Quelch earned the sobriquet 'bull-dog' for his tenacity during the Dewsbury by-election.¹⁴⁶ The Yorkshire Post described him at work:

...thick-set, beetle-browed and heavy jawed....

Tenacity is writ all over him; it sounds in his voice; submit him to all the tortures of the

Inquisition, and he will not modify one view or

depart from his purpose. His voice is that of

the agitator, deep and thick, the Hyde Park

Sunday afternoon kind of voice, unmusical but

unmistakable and far-reaching,¹⁴⁷



Harry Quelch, SDF parliamentary candidate
for Dewsbury, 1902.

Quelch's sincerity and devotion to the cause earned him respect even from his opponents. Turner regarded him as 'a fearless but hard political fighter...one of the best exponents of Socialism in his day and generation.'¹⁴⁸ The Liberal press was forced to admit that 'If the poll could be taken in the middle of one of his addresses he might possibly carry the day' for, as one observer recalled 'he could tawk couldt'fella.... It wor fair flaysome to hear him.'¹⁴⁹ In tandem with Hyndman, at Batley's Victoria Hall, for example, the message seemed quite irresistible. The two of them, 'gifted with eloquence, played on the audience as if it had been a lute; it was responsive to every emotion that was wafted from the platform.'¹⁵⁰ Hyndman made a marked but alluring contrast to Quelch, a 'benevolent-looking old gentleman' who could pass for 'a mild-mannered dean who lives in his cathedral's past.'¹⁵¹ As he strode the platform he constantly buttoned and unbuttoned his coat and ran his fingers through his long beard. Turner commented that 'to hear him expound his theories was both picturesque and educative.'¹⁵² The Yorkshire Post assessed them perfectly:

...there is certainly a great deal about the men themselves to attract you. The Socialist of the best class, that class to which Mr. Quelch belongs, is no ignorant firebrand. He is an educated man, usually self-educated, very often a linguist and deeply read in the literature of more than one

country. Oratory is one of the special accomplishments of this class...as public speakers, as makers of resonant phrases, as mouthpieces for a fine flow of language, they usually take high rank...as men with broad sympathies, with keen literary tastes, with true concern for the lot of those less comfortably endowed than themselves they are delightful.¹⁵³

The message and the way it was delivered attracted support in a constituency with a Radical tradition. Quelch's arguments against working men sending their capitalist employers to Parliament, his attacks on the housing conditions in the Dewsbury area, his stated support for trade unionism were persuasive to an increasing number of men who had grown suspicious of Liberal platitudes. Socialism had had a presence in the town for some nine years, with a certain amount of success, and Quelch's ability could build on that. The nature of the constituency aided him.

Political thought is especially virile in the small towns which surround Dewsbury and Batley. In the long winter evenings there is nothing for the men to do...but to either read at home or go round to the club or the public house...into the reading rooms of the workmen's clubs you find everywhere I can only attribute much of the knowledge of current day events which is widespread through

the constituency to the copious supply of printed matter which these institutions afford. This knowledge always manifests itself at the meetings which are nightly held.¹⁵⁴

The packed meetings and the excitement of the campaign bred a feeling of anticipation in the Socialist ranks. 'I think yet we shall arrive', said Walter Crosland of the Dewsbury Clarion Fellowship,¹⁵⁵ whilst Justice regarded the outlook as 'bright and encouraging...the chances of victory are good.'¹⁵⁶ They were buoyed up by hope, nourished by idealism, rejuvenated at the thought of attempting the impossible. Mere propagandising could be a thankless task but the election provided a definite and realisable goal to aim for. Even their opponents admitted that Quelch 'would seem to be gathering support wherever he goes.'¹⁵⁷ In the event Socialist optimism was ill-founded and the odds against Quelch too great, but Snowden's prediction that 'He will poll heavier than we feared'¹⁵⁸ was borne out. In the heaviest poll ever recorded for a Dewsbury election the SDF candidate received 1,597 votes, as opposed to 4,512 for the Conservative and 5,660 for Runciman. The Liberal majority had been reduced by 1,000 which, as the Liberal agent admitted, was due almost entirely to Quelch's presence.¹⁵⁹ Most surprisingly of all Quelch had polled 517 votes more than Hartley had done in 1895, in spite of the divisions in the ranks of the Labour party. He 'had done better than any of his critics had forecast',¹⁶⁰ polling three times Glasier's estimate. This

reflected the blinkered views of the ILP leaders where the SDF was concerned, and it demonstrated that an overtly Socialist candidate could command considerable support both in Dewsbury and, as Victor Grayson later showed, elsewhere in the country.

The election campaign certainly boosted the position of the SDF in Dewsbury. After the contest Tom Myers was forced to admit that 'the standing of the I.L.P. in Dewsbury has gone', to be replaced by that of the Social-Democratic Federation. 'It was a body of no account', he said, but 'now it is recognised.'¹⁶¹ Myers even feared for the future of the ILP in Thornhill Lees. There was quite clearly a great deal of local hostility towards the ILP leadership, which Myers felt would take some time to subside. Thus George Allen, a founder member of the ILP, wrote from ILP Cottage in Dewsbury to express his disillusionment:

...the way the Labour Leader has misrepresented the workers of Dewsbury in this fight has shown, I think, that it is not worthy of any support.... I am glad that this thing has happened, as it shows where the enemies of Socialism are.¹⁶²

Ben Turner was particularly heavily criticised¹⁶³ and his behaviour after the election was revealing. He moderated, indeed abandoned, his hostility towards the SDF and declared himself anxious to forget the past and to 'join all progressive

forces to work amicably together at the next election.'¹⁶⁴
But he also attempted to re-establish his Socialist credentials.
At one meeting, said Myers, Turner 'went as far as the most
rabid revolutionary S.D.F. man could expect him to go.'¹⁶⁵
His credibility was obviously weakened, temporarily at least,
and the SDF had gained respect. The Clarion Fellowship amal-
gamated with the SDF in April¹⁶⁶ and in August 1902 two new
branches of the Federation were formed, at Ravensthorpe and
Batley.¹⁶⁷ These were the result of organising work by Friend
Lister, aided by a grant from the centre, for the Executive
was obviously very optimistic about the Federation's prospects
in Dewsbury. In the event there was little evidence of
activity from these branches, although Batley survived until
the early months of 1904. Indeed they might simply have
resulted from a geographical division of the SDF's existing
forces. Nonetheless their existence reflected the prevalent
optimism and the healthy state of the Dewsbury branch, which
scored a further propaganda success when two local clergymen
became members.¹⁶⁸ The climax of the branch's summer season
of outdoor propaganda came when it mounted a widely publicised
garden party in the grounds of Wood Hall, the home of the
Jessops. SDF speakers such as Quelch and Irving were accompanied
by the newly formed Dewsbury Socialist Choir; the fete was given
the seal of approval by the Dewsbury Temperance Band and the
Purlwell Wesleyan Choir amongst others, and over 600 attended.
The SDF in Dewsbury had come a long way since its first meeting,
five years earlier, in Lister's house. Its new-found status

was emphasised by Lister's election to the provincial section of the Executive in 1903, achieving third place in the poll. He was certainly confident for the future, predicting at least four new branches in surrounding towns. As he commented, 'We have got the centre firmly established; now let us see if it can spread out a bit.'¹⁶⁹

Yet the election had more than local significance. In many ways it encapsulated the problems of the Labour and Socialist movement nationally. The isolation of the SDF from the rest of the movement was clearly demonstrated and this was undoubtedly due to its withdrawal from the Labour Representation Committee. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the Dewsbury affair no amount of rhetoric could hide the fact that its relations with the ILP in particular were strained almost beyond repair. Conversely the tensions within the alliance of Socialists and trade unionists which constituted the LRC were also visible. An examination of the Socialist and Labour Press reveals an extraordinary amount of interest in the Dewsbury contest, and this was demonstrated by the support Quelch received from the Clarion Movement in particular but also from branches and members of the ILP in defiance of NAC instructions. This confirmed Philip Snowden's opinion that 'The movement nationally seems just now in something of a crisis',¹⁷⁰ for only two years after its formation many Socialists had become disillusioned with the progress of the LRC. They were suspicious of the aims of their trade union colleagues, fearful that the Socialist ideal was being

relegated further and further into the background. The refusal of both the LRC and the ILP to back Quelch confirmed their doubts. Many Socialists viewed with distaste the bickerings and manoeuvrings of party leaders and yearned for a united Socialist movement, irrespective of party label. This standpoint was forcefully expressed by 'Dangle', A. M. Thompson of the Clarion, who viewed Quelch's performance as

a crushing blow to the conflicting "Leaders" and
a triumphant vindication of Socialist Unity....

The rank and file of Dewsbury have shown the way;
Socialists of all denominations have shut their
eyes for once to the scowlings and nudgings of
rival party officials and stood shoulder to
shoulder for Socialism.¹⁷¹

Thus the Clarion renewed its appeal for Socialist unity, a call readily echoed by the SDF.

The Federation did not regard the result at Dewsbury as a failure. Harry Quelch declared that 'We have increased our poll by 50 per cent, we have fought a good fight, we have kept the faith.'¹⁷² The SDF was in no way inclined to admit that withdrawal from the LRC had weakened its effort; it preferred to emphasise that over 1,500 votes had been cast for Social-Democracy pure and simple and drew the conclusion that a consolidation of Socialist forces outside the LRC was possible. Thus its Annual Conference for 1902 reaffirmed the decision

to remain outside the LRC and called for Socialist unity. Essentially therefore the Social-Democratic Federation had reverted to its propagandist stance of the mid 1890s, attempting to build a revolutionary party outside the ranks of the organised working class, a position which would leave it stranded once more between reformism and revolution.

NOTES

1. Clarion, 15 June 1901.
2. William Morris to Mrs. William Morris, 25 February 1884, in P. Henderson (ed), The Letters of William Morris to His Family and Friends, (1950), p.194.
3. Clarion, 15 June 1901.
4. Justice, 10 July 1887 and 15 April 1888.
5. Ibid., 2 May 1885.
6. B. Turner, A Short History of the General Union of Textile Workers, (1920), p.124.
7. B. Turner, A Short Account of the Rise and Progress of the Heavy Woollen District Branch of the General Union of Textile Workers, (1917), p.83.
8. Justice, 5 March 1892.
9. Ibid., 29 October 1892.
10. Ibid., 12 August 1893.
11. Ibid., 9 June 1894.
12. See Chapter IX.
13. See Chapter IV.
14. A. G. Wolfe to Keir Hardie, ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 1894/124.
15. Clarion, 1 December 1894.
16. Justice, 7 October 1899.
17. K. Laybourn and J. Reynolds, Liberalism and the Rise of Labour 1890-1918, (1984), p.36.

18. Ibid, p.40.
19. E. P. Thompson, 'Homage to Tom Maguire', in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), Essays in Labour History, Volume I, (1960), pp.276-316.
20. ILP News, August 1897.
21. Bradford Labour Echo, 4 January 1896.
22. Justice, 16 December 1893.
23. Ibid., 7 September 1895.
24. Bradford Labour Echo, 5 October 1895.
25. Justice, 16 November 1895.
26. Ibid., 11 July 1896; Bradford Labour Echo, 4 July 1896.
27. Justice, 11 July 1896.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., 10 October 1896.
30. Ibid., 11 September 1897.
31. Ibid., 13 July 1896.
32. C. J. James, M.P. For Dewsbury, (1970), p.81.
33. Ibid., p.110.
34. Dewsbury Reporter, 26 June 1897.
35. B. Turner, About Myself, (1930), p.98.
36. Dewsbury Reporter, 13 January 1893.
37. Clarion, 10 November 1894.
38. Dewsbury Reporter, 3 November 1894.
39. Turner, A Short Account of the Rise and Progress of the Heavy Woollen District Branch of the General Union of Textile Workers, p.56.
40. Dewsbury Reporter, 20 October and 24 November 1894.

41. Ibid., 6 October 1894.
42. Ibid., 5 December 1894.
43. Ibid., 27 October 1894.
44. Ibid., 8 December 1894.
45. Ibid., 6 July 1895.
46. Ibid., 29 June 1895.
47. Laybourn and Reynolds, op.cit., p.62.
48. Oldroyd (Liberal) 5,379; Cautley (Conservative) 3,875; Hartley (ILP) 1,080.
49. Dewsbury and District News, 20 July 1895.
50. Dewsbury Reporter, 13 July 1895.
51. Ibid., 7 and 15 September 1895.
52. See, for example, Mark Oldroyd's speech at Bradford Liberal Club; Ibid., 1 February 1896.
53. Ibid., 2 November 1895.
54. Ibid., 19 October 1895, confirmed by Ben Turner in the Dewsbury Reporter, 29 January 1898.
55. Turner, A Short Account of the Rise and Progress of the Heavy Woollen District Branch of the General Union of Textile Workers, pp.55-56.
56. Clarion, 10 November 1894.
57. Dewsbury Reporter, 1 February 1896.
58. Clarion, 20 December 1901.
59. Dewsbury Reporter, 21 March 1896.
60. Ibid., 10 October 1896.
61. T. Taylor to John Penny, 26 April 1897, ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 1897/42.

62. Justice., 28 May, 1898.
63. Ibid., 10 April 1897.
64. Ibid., 10 March 1898.
65. Dewsbury Reporter, 1 January 1898.
66. Ibid., 21 March 1896.
67. Ibid., 22 January 1898.
68. Ibid., 25 June 1898.
69. Ibid., 22 August 1896.
70. Ibid., 31 July 1897.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid., 8 April 1899.
73. Justice, 30 July 1898.
74. Watmough, op.cit.
75. Clarion, 20 December 1901; ILP News, December 1901;
Labour Leader, 11 January 1902.
76. Dewsbury and District News, 19 May 1900.
77. Ibid.
78. Dewsbury Reporter, 25 April 1896.
79. Dewsbury and District News, 11 August 1900.
80. Trades Council Statement in the Dewsbury Reporter, 22
September 1900.
81. Ibid., 29 September 1900.
82. Ibid., 1 October 1900.
83. Ibid., 28 July 1900.
84. Mark Oldroyd (Liberal) 6,045;; Forbes St. John Morrow
(Conservative) 3,897.
85. Dewsbury Reporter, 27 October 1900.

86. Justice., 15 June 1901.
87. Dewsbury Reporter, 19 January and 10 August 1901. This was a favourite theme of Wood's, who spoke in similar vein at a Mirfield conference of clergy and Socialists in 1906. See The Report of a Conference at the Community of the Resurrection, 5 May 1906.
88. Dewsbury Reporter, 12 October and 9 November 1901.
89. Justice, 22 June 1901.
90. Dewsbury Reporter, 15 June 1901.
91. ILP News, November 1901.
92. Ibid., October 1901.
93. Richard Bell to J. R. MacDonald, 30 November 1901, LRC Correspondence 3/41.
94. Labour Leader, 11 January 1902.
95. Laybourn and Reynolds, op.cit., p.126.
96. Labour Leader, 2 March 1901.
97. See Pelling, op.cit., p.213.
98. Dewsbury Reporter, 24 August 1901.
99. Clarion, 29 June 1901; Labour Leader, 29 June 1901.
100. See T. Myers to Keir Hardie, ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 01/68; Dewsbury Reporter, 29 June 1901.
101. Dewsbury Reporter, 5 October 1901.
102. Ibid., 12 October 1901.
103. Ibid., 19 October 1901.
104. J. H. Field to Keir Hardie, 10 November 1901, ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 01/51.

105. T. Myers to Keir Hardie, 7 February 1902, Ibid., 02/15.
106. Laybourn and Reynolds, op.cit., p.126.
107. The sub-committee consisted of Allen Gee, close friend of Ben Turner; Owen Connellan, secretary of Leeds Trades Council and an ILPer; John Hodge, secretary of the Steel Smelters' union.
108. Labour Leader, 7 December 1901.
109. O. Connellan to J. R. MacDonald, 29 November 1901, LRC Correspondence, 3/120.
110. ILP News, December 1901.
111. Labour Leader, 7 December 1901; Dewsbury Reporter, 7 December 1901. Philip Snowden wasn't so sure. 'He will poll heavier than we feared. This will be awkward', he wrote to Ramsay MacDonald on 21 January 1902. See LRC Correspondence, 3/124.
112. Dewsbury Reporter, 14 December 1901.
113. Ibid.
114. Clarion, 7 December 1901.
115. Ibid.
116. E. R. Hartley, Diary, 21 November 1901.
117. Dewsbury Reporter, 21 December 1901.
118. Clarion, 21 December 1901.
119. Labour Leader, 11 January 1902.
120. Dewsbury Reporter, 12 October 1901.
121. ILP News, February 1902.
122. Dewsbury Reporter, 12 October 1901.
123. Quelch Election Committee Minutes, 1 December 1901.
124. See Chapter XI.

125. Dewsbury Reporter, 16 November 1901.
126. Ibid., 26 October 1901.
127. Ibid.
128. Quelch Election Committee Minutes, 1 and 8 December 1901.
129. James, op.cit., p.134.
130. See, for example, Yorkshire Post, 24 January 1902.
131. See, for example, Walter Crane in the Clarion, 16 November 1901.
132. Dewsbury Reporter, 4 January 1902.
133. Ibid., 25 January 1902.
134. Leeds and Yorkshire Mercury, 16 and 17 January 1902.
135. Dewsbury Reporter, 25 January 1902.
136. Ibid., 18 January 1902.
137. Ibid., 25 January 1902.
138. James, op.cit., p.134.
139. Quelch Election Committee Minutes, 24 November and 8 December 1901.
140. Yorkshire Post, 29 January 1902; Clarion, 30 January 1902.
141. Leeds and Yorkshire Mercury, 10 January 1902.
142. Dewsbury Reporter, 4 January 1902.
143. ILP News, January 1902.
144. Yorkshire Post, 27 January 1902.
145. Dewsbury Reporter, 25 January 1902.
146. J. H. Field to Keir Hardie, 10 November 1901, ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection; Yorkshire Post, 24 January 1902.
147. Yorkshire Post, 24 January 1902.

148. Turner, About Myself, p.329.
149. 'Martha Dawson', dialect column in the Dewsbury Reporter,
26 October 1901.
150. Yorkshire Post, 24 January 1902.
151. Ibid.
152. Turner, About Myself, p.329.
153. Yorkshire Post, 16 January 1902.
154. Ibid., 22 January 1902. Dewsbury Socialist Club had a particularly fine library as one old member, Leonard Anderson, recalled in an interview I had with him on 22 February 1982. At the time of the election club members were provided with the following newspapers:
Daily Despatch; Municipal Journal; Clarion; Labour Leader; Royal Review; Harmsworth; Review of Reviews; Justice; Reynolds' Newspaper; Dewsbury Reporter; Sunday Chronicle.
155. Clarion, 10 January 1902.
156. Justice, 25 January 1902.
157. Yorkshire Post, 27 January 1902.
158. P. Snowden to J. R. MacDonald, 21 January 1902, LRC Correspondence, 3/124.
159. Dewsbury Reporter, 22 February 1902.
160. James, op.cit., p.138.
161. T. Myers to Keir Hardie, 7 February 1902, ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 02/15.
162. Justice, 8 February 1902.
163. T. Myers to Keir Hardie, 7 February 1902, ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 02/15.
164. Dewsbury Reporter, 22 February 1902.

165. T. Myers to Keir Hardie, 17 May 1903, ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 03/98.
166. Dewsbury Socialist Club, Minutes, 11 April 1902.
167. Justice, 2 August 1902.
168. Reverend J. Morgan Whiteman of the Unity Church and Reverend C. Porter Shirley.
169. Justice, 13 September 1902.
170. P. Snowden to Keir Hardie, 17 January 1902, ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 02/9.
171. Clarion, 7 February 1902.
172. Dewsbury Reporter, 1 February 1902.

PART III

'LEFT IN THE CENTRE' - THE
SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION 1901-16.

INTRODUCTION.

The Socialist Movement from the 1880s to the mid-1890s was a growing movement, not in the restricted sense of party membership but in the sense that its message reached out to ever wider sections of the population. As William Morris and Belfort Bax pointed out in 1893, 'Ten years ago the British working classes knew nothing of socialism...that is now so much changed...there is no longer any hostility to socialism.'¹ Its circle of involvement was much larger than the actual membership would indicate; Edinburgh's 'Labour Day' in 1894, for example, was attended by ten thousand marchers and an estimated 120,000 spectators.² Hence Robert Blatchford's continual appeals to the 'unattached' through the Clarion, plus the mushrooming of Socialist societies independent of affiliation. In many cases membership of one party or another was an accident of time, place or circumstance, and many Socialists were members of more than one organisation. A feeling of fellowship pervaded the movement, which meant that conflict between various organisations, although frequent, was not fratricidal. Many members of the Socialist League later returned to the SDF and the two co-operated on many a platform; similarly ILPers and SDFers worked side by side in many areas. Above all else an air of optimism abounded; there was a belief in imminent change, encouraged by the apparent instability of the political system and the belief in the impending demise of the Liberal Party. The Socialist Party

would soon take its place in the final conflict between Capital and Labour.

In such an atmosphere the logic of 'Socialist unity' seemed irrefutable and it stood its greatest chance of success. As Stephen Yeo has suggested, 'Socialism in that period had not yet become the prisoner of a particular elaborate party machine - a machine which would come to associate its own well being with the prospects for Socialism.'³ Rank and file pressure on party leaderships in the early days meant a much greater democracy within the movement than was later apparent, particularly for the ILP. The failure of both the SDF and the ILP to make the hoped for advances in the mid-1890s encouraged the leaderships to respond to such pressure, spurred on from without by Blatchford and his vision of 'the great unattached' army to be recruited by a unified Socialist party. The failure of the unity attempt can be explained in terms of the changing circumstances of the time. British capitalism proved itself, as ever, extraordinarily resilient and the expected revolutionary situation never materialised. The Liberal Party reorganised itself and once more, albeit temporarily, took its place as the second party of Capital. Such trends meant that the Socialist parties found themselves without a mass movement to lead and they therefore retreated into their own particular shells. A group interested in bureaucratic consolidation gained a commanding position within the ILP and this party leadership wanted no part of Socialist unity; its conception of Socialism

differed from that of the SDF and it did not wish to endanger its drive for an alliance with the trade unions by associating too closely with an avowed revolutionary party: the blame for the collapse of unity negotiations in the 1890s can be laid fairly and squarely at the door of the ILP cabal of Hardie, Snowden, Glasier and MacDonald.

The SDF's history in the first twenty years of its existence dispel the stereotype of an alien intrusion onto the British political scene, which struggled to establish any roots. Developments both in London and Lancashire militate against the notion that the ILP was the natural vehicle for British Socialism. In London the SDF provided continuity with secular and radical traditions and, as Paul Thompson has pointed out, its trade union connections in the capital made it more influential than the ILP. Spokesmen for London's working-class communities such as George Lansbury and Will Thorne turned to the SDF rather than to the ILP. In Lancashire the Federation was active before the ILP; it adapted itself to local conditions, and in centres such as Burnley, Blackburn and Rochdale established a viable Socialist option. As its name implies, the SDF was a semi-autonomous rather than a centralised body. This was both its strength and its weakness. It meant that locally branches could respond to events and utilise their knowledge of the area, but conversely there was no agreed national policy. The Federation spent much of its time engaged in debate, which inevitably reduced its effectiveness.

Broadly speaking there were two contrasting trends in the SDF, one towards concentrating exclusively on local issues and 'palliatives', the other emphasising the revolutionary objective, although supporters of this trend were often unclear as to the means. The leadership, and Hyndman in particular, failed to give a clear lead and often veered between one trend and the other, viewing them not in a dialectical synthesis but as mutually exclusive. As the Hyndmanites controlled Justice and comprised many of the Federation's most prominent figures their views were often seen as synonymous with those of the SDF. This confusion between the pronouncements of the party nationally and the reality of its activities locally is largely explanatory of the fact that the Social-Democratic Federation had entered the Twentieth Century a curiously static body.

In 1894 Engels estimated that some 100,000 members had passed through the ranks of the SDF and this is illustrative of the fact that although it could recruit converts it largely failed to hold them. T. A. Jackson neatly assessed the problem. Members of the SDF, he said,

thought their duty done when they had told the workers with reiterated emphasis that they had been and were being robbed systematically, and given them an exposition of how the trick had been worked. From this the workers were invited to draw a moral deduction that the robbers ought to be stopped, and to reach a practical decision

to wage a class war upon the robbers.⁴

When faced with the fact that most workers declined to take up the fight many SDFers concluded that 'the bastards aren't worth saving'⁵ and gravitated to other fields. Jackson's view is not entirely accurate; it ignores the very real debate waged within the party over policy and regional developments in areas such as Lancashire. But in the absence of a coherent policy SDF members tended to fall back upon a 'propagandist' stance and this was certainly the position nationally. The formation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 offered the SDF a wider audience for its message and the opportunity to eschew its educational role in favour of a more activist policy within the Labour movement. In 1900 the Socialist movement was in a state of transition, very much at the crossroads of its history. For a short period the SDF marched hand in hand with the ranks of organised Labour but this phase ended with its withdrawal from the LRC in 1901. Thereafter it failed to offer a clear-cut alternative to the Labour alliance, attempting to steer a middle course between reformism and impossibilism, its leaders seeking a combination of political practicality and theoretical soundness. This middle course failed to satisfy many party members. The continued emphasis on palliatives, the stress on electoral politics, and the desire for unity with the anti-Marxist ILP exasperated an increasingly vocal minority within its own ranks who saw the Federation attempting an illusory short cut to Socialism. The opposition of the

'impossibilists' was exacerbated by their irritation at the dominance of the Federation by the middle-aged, middle-class 'old Guard'. Hyndman's elitist attitudes particularly annoyed them, his views encapsulated in the following letter:

I don't mind saying that I am utterly disgusted with workers here in general and with our party in particular. Neither deserve to have men of ability from the educated classes to serve them. It is a waste of life. They are not worth the personal sacrifice and continual worry.⁶

For the first time since the days of the Socialist League the hegemony of the Hyndmanites was being challenged. The 'impossibilists' were instrumental in forcing the decision to withdraw from the LRC, but they eventually proved little more than an irritant to the leadership, which forced them out of the party. The struggle to connect theory and practice reduced the SDF to virtual immobility in the early years of the century, and it functioned more 'as a kind of conscience within the wider Socialist movement'⁷ than as a party in its own right. Frustration at the lack of progress led to the emergence of a more formidable opposition grouping centred around the émigré Theodore Rothstein. He first voiced criticism of the party's direction during the Boer War, aided by Ernest Belfort Bax, who wanted to augment Hyndman's narrow economic conception of Socialism with a new 'Ethic of Socialism.' Whilst few members were prepared to follow Bax in his search for a new moral

consciousness, and indeed Rothstein openly opposed his arguments, many were similarly concerned at the SDF's shortcomings. Three issues provided a focus for dissent. The first of these was the suffrage, or 'The Woman Question'; the second debate concerned the value of industrial action and organisation; the third, and potentially most divisive, was that of international relations and foreign policy. Under attack the Executive revived the Socialist unity campaign as a diversion from the party's problems and as a unifying tactic. Its opponents hoped to gain new strength from a consolidation of Socialist forces and were therefore also enthusiastic for unity.

External factors also influenced the Federation in favour of unity. Stanley Pierson has described the period before the First World War as a time when the British Socialist movement embarked upon a 'Journey from Fantasy to Politics', abandoning its hope of a rapid Socialist transformation of society in favour of a more long-term perspective, adapting itself to political reality. Such a transition appalled many Socialists. Revulsion at the Labour Party's performance in Parliament after 1906 spurred a spirit of revolt within the ILP and among Socialists generally. This first found expression with the election of Victor Grayson to Parliament for the Colne Valley constituency on an explicitly Socialist ticket. It was reinforced by the revived influence of the Clarion, which was instrumental in the formation of local Socialist Societies independent of both SDF and ILP. The Federation was further encouraged by the growth

of opposition within the ILP to party policy, culminating in the so-called 'Green Manifesto', and by the increasing industrial unrest. Thus, in 1911, the SDF prepared to launch a new campaign for Socialist unity, only to be pre-empted by Victor Grayson, who announced his own appeal for a 'British Socialist Party.' The two campaigns eventually merged but harmony was difficult to maintain. The various groups which coalesced were divided from the start over the policy to be adopted, and united only by discontent with their previous organisations and with the prevailing capitalist system. Although the SDF provided the only coherent grouping within the BSP - 'it remained a unit and therefore dominated the more loosely-knit hotch-potch of ILPers and Clarionites'⁸ - it too had been divided internally and these divisions soon manifested themselves in the new party. Furthermore its leadership, the 'Old Guard', proved incapable of adapting itself to new ideas, of moving with events. Trapped by reflexes developed in a different era the SDF attempted to cast the new party in an old mould, and its rejection of industrial action alienated many new recruits and prevented any effective alliance between the mass industrial movement and the BSP. Significantly, the ranks of the opposition to the Hyndmanites had been considerably strengthened by the formation of the new party.

The failure of the attempt to forge a mass Socialist party led to a break with SDF tradition. A long-time opponent of a Labour alliance the party now moved towards affiliation to the Labour Party, which was agreed in 1913 and finally achieved in

1916. In reality this solved what had been the major problem throughout its history, the dichotomy between its revolutionary phraseology and its essentially reformist practice. Affiliation to the Labour Party meant that the SDF demonstrated with finality 'the essentially parliamentary basis of their doctrine, in fact, inspired more by Kautsky and German Social Democracy than by Marx.'⁹ Ironically this became clear after Hyndman and his supporters had been forced out of the party for, under the impact of war, the inherent divisions between the reformist and revolutionary wings were strained to breaking point. Socialist unity, a long-cherished ambition, had in fact presaged the eventual demise of the 'Old Guard' and their creation, the Social-Democratic Federation. Its demise was completed by the influence of the Bolshevik Revolution.

NOTES.

1. Morris and Bax, op.cit., pp.269-270.
2. Yeo, 'A New Life', p.28.
3. Ibid., p.31.
4. T. A. Jackson, a manuscript autobiography, quoted in S. MacIntyre, 'Review Articles: Some Recent Labour History', The Historical Journal, Vol.22,3, September 1979, pp.721-730.
5. Ibid.
6. Hyndman to Neil Maclean, 3 September 1900, quoted in Challinor, op.cit., p.14.
7. Pierson, British Socialists, p.91.
8. Groves, op.cit., p.119.
9. Ibid., p.138.

CHAPTER XI.

PRO-BOERS AND IMPOSSIBILISTS.

The SDF had always proclaimed an anti-imperialist position, championing Home Rule for Ireland and publicising the distress in India. However, its stance had been substantially weakened by the nationalist idiosyncracies of Hyndman. His hostility towards Germany manifested itself also in antipathy towards the German Socialist party,¹ whilst his obsessive belief in the need for a strong British navy and his vision of the 'Anglo-Saxon race' leading the way to Socialism demonstrated a marked divergence from the internationalism of Marx. Hyndman's ideas, mapped out in England for All, and little altered thereafter, had caused William Morris, Bax, Eleanor Marx and others to leave the SDF in December 1884. They created a further furore with the outbreak of the Boer War.

The danger signals were clearly evident at the time of the Jameson Raid in 1896. Although the Federation condemned the episode as 'criminal',² it did so in articles with both anti-Semitic and anti-German overtones.³ More startling still was the SDF Manifesto on Foreign and Colonial Policy; this in effect called for an increase in the strength of the British navy, reassuring its readers that the navy, in contradistinction to the army, was not an 'anti-democratic force'.⁴ The rationale for expanding the navy was simple: 'We don't want to be starved or to be conquered by other powers nor do we wish to be deprived of our colonies or to shirk our share in international difficulties.'

Such a concept of foreign policy was strictly nationalistic; the manifesto never mentioned 'imperialism' nor did it even hint at a class view of international relations. Hyndman's influence was clear; he had, in a unique way, welded his Socialism to his nationalism. To echo Bill Baker, 'he wanted a powerful Britain with a big navy so that when she became socialist she could spread enlightenment throughout her empire, and use her vast influence among the nations in favour of socialism.'⁶

There was a swift reaction to such xenophobia. George Green of the Brixton branch spoke for many when he complained about the 'jingoism' pervading the SDF, and he protested that the members hadn't even been consulted before the issue of the manifesto. A more formidable opponent for Hyndman was Ernest Belfort Bax, who had rejoined the Federation after the demise of the Socialist League. A fervent internationalist, Bax had been one of the first Socialists to analyse imperialism as a major threat to Socialism. In the May Day number of Justice for 1896 he argued that the search for new markets aimed to compensate capitalists for their struggles at home, that imperialism would therefore tend to extend the life of capitalism. Modern war was an economic war, said Bax, with capitalists becoming increasingly disinclined to military conflict. Indeed 'rival governing classes will stand together' against both the native populations and their own working classes. Socialists should therefore make common cause with the natives. Bax's position was clearly that of International Socialism, Hyndman's view strictly 'anglo-centric'. A clash was inevitable.

In the period between the Jameson Raid and the outbreak of the South African war Justice, to its credit, maintained an anti-imperialist stance. Its intellectual inconsistencies would not have troubled the bulk of the membership, who were more concerned with events at home. Very perceptively too the paper warned, as early as April 1897, that Britain 'was making ready for a war in South Africa.'⁷ The outbreak of that war though placed Hyndman in a dilemma, for his support for the rights of small nations was vitiated by a fear of appearing anti-British. In an effort to avoid this impasse Hyndman resurrected his anti-Semitism. Thus the war was instigated by 'Jew financial cliques and their hangers on',⁸ stimulated by the 'Jew-jingo press' and encouraged by 'these aliens, who in the guise of patriots are engaged in hounding on the Government to a criminal war of aggression.'⁹ However much Hyndman might protest that he had no animosity towards Jews¹⁰ his aim was clear. He intended to shift the blame for the war away from British capitalists and British politicians by suggesting that they had been duped by 'a gang of millionaire mine owners, chiefly foreign Jews.'¹¹ The duty of 'native-born Englishmen' was self-evident; they should oppose 'the butchering Semites' who had invaded the Transvaal.

This interpretation of the war shocked many SDF members and enraged the Federation's strong Jewish émigré element. Theodore Rothstein, who had previously complained about 'the unsavoury tendencies...of anti-Semitism' within the SDF,¹² demanded an Executive resolution condemning this 'muddy current'. He launched a scathing attack on Hyndman: 'We all know well where that

current comes from', he suggested; from a man 'who, with all his talents and virtues, has never been able to shake off the particular bias implanted, perhaps, by education, but certainly fostered by his milieu.'¹³ Another Jewish Socialist attacked those whose 'race prejudice they have imbibed with their mother's milk', and yet another pointed out that it was the Jewish working class rather than the Jewish capitalists who would suffer most from such anti-Semitism.¹⁴ Belfort Bax, however, once more provided the most sustained assault on Hyndman's position. 'I am pro-Boer', he proclaimed, pouring scorn on the idea that a Jewish conspiracy lay behind the war; Englishmen should be concerned with their own capitalists first and foremost, for the class struggle superseded any national struggle. Socialists had to be pro-Boer because they had to resist 'the violence of Great Britain and international capitalism.'¹⁵ The sheer weight of criticism certainly put Hyndman and his supporters on the defensive, but there remained an undercurrent of anti-Semitism in the SDF, so much so that the Annual Conference of 1900 was pressed to pass a resolution condemning such bias.¹⁶

Whatever the 'individual fads and fancies' of individual SDFers, as J. B. Askew described them, there was no denying the Federation's strong initial public stance against the war. It had called a demonstration on 30 June 1899 to protest against the 'piratical Jingoism' of the Government, and on the very brink of war the SDF participated in another demonstration convened by the anti-war Radicals. At that meeting the platform speakers

were subject to a violent assault from which Hyndman considered himself lucky to escape.¹⁷ To oppose the war at open meetings required considerable courage but SDF members were heartened by the forthright lead they received. In the early weeks of 1900 Justice came out strongly against the war, in which it saw 'as much an incident in the class war as any strike or lock-out ever was.'¹⁸ Quelch emphasised that class was more important than race and that the Boers were 'ipso facto on the side of the workers.'¹⁹ This anti-war propaganda culminated in the issue of an uncompromising manifesto attacking 'The most unnecessary and unjust capitalist war of modern times.' The manifesto called for opposition to conscription and the introduction of a citizen army, and it concluded with this appeal:

If, then, fight you must, fight here. If you are eager to show your courage, display it here. If you are determined to establish an adequate franchise, demand it here. If you are ready to protect your Empire, safeguard it here. If you burn to revenge your slaughtered kinsfolk avenge them here. Shake off the apathy and indifference which render you powerless, even in politics, and take the control of your own country into your own hands.²⁰

This was the kind of rhetorical flourish at which the SDF excelled, and the membership gave the manifesto an enthusiastic welcome. It signalled a closing of ranks in the face of a largely hostile environment. Moreover, it established the

position of the Social-Democratic Federation as an internationalist Socialist party at a time when Blatchford supported the war and the Fabians were divided on the issue. The Federation has been criticised for failing 'to carry out any polemic against Blatchford's position or against that of the Fabians.'²¹ This is both untrue and misleading. 'Tattler' attacked Blatchford's attitude on several occasions²² and Justice continually emphasised that there were no grounds for differences of opinion amongst Socialists on the question of the war. Those few SDFers who dissented from the anti-war line found their views mercilessly quashed,²³ as branch meetings up and down the country carried resolutions protesting against the war. More to the point, opposition to the war needed to be expressed to as wide an audience as possible and not restricted to a dispute between or within Socialist parties. Throughout 1900 the pages of Justice were dominated by the war; the SDF called its own anti-war meetings and participated in others, often providing stewards for organisations such as the 'Stop-the-War-Committee'. In an attempt to counteract the Establishment press pamphlets were issued by Hyndman, Diack and Statham, explaining the SDF position and exposing the truth, as they saw it, of the situation in the Boer Republics. The party's stance at this time was clear and uncompromising, but Theodore Rothstein was convinced that more could, and should be done.

Rothstein saw the war as a means of accelerating the decline of Liberalism and thereby providing the SDF with an opportunity

which must be seized. They must, he said,

leave the sect stage of their political existence
...cease carrying on the campaign of Freedom in
the nooks and corners of a small paper and of
branch meetings....They must also cast aside
their methods of mere criticism which disting-
uish a sect and an outsider and can never by
itself gain any considerable following and
develop and elaborate in all its details a
positive programme capable of being realised
within the present day conditions and prove it
to the public.²⁴

In essence Rothstein wanted a more militant campaign against
the war and not simply a registering of protest. Yet his was
not simply a comment upon the anti-war agitation but a more
fundamental criticism of SDF strategy. His trenchant criticism
of the SDF's incipient sectarianism highlighted the party's
major weaknesses, its tendency to snipe from the sidelines,
its failure to synthesise its single-issue campaigns with
the broader fight for Socialism, and its failure to identify
issues which might provide a platform for the expansion of the
party. As he pointed out,

If we wish history to take a certain direction and
at the same time not to be left out of account
ourselves, we must actively intercede in the chain

of events and try to shape them in accordance
with our wishes and ultimate goal.²⁵

The war, said Rothstein, was the opportunity to regenerate the Socialist movement, 'to inflame our souls with a sacred fire'. It was an opportunity which presented itself infrequently and which the SDF could not afford to ignore.

Rothstein's argument seems scarcely credible in the face of the widely held belief that the Boer War generated overwhelming working-class support and enthusiasm for imperialism. Hyndman's treatment at the Trafalgar Square demonstration, the manhandling of Lloyd George in Birmingham, the exuberant celebrations of the relief of Mafeking, attacks on the office of the Labour Leader, were presumed manifestations of the unpopularity of anti-war supporters. If that were true then a campaign such as Rothstein envisaged would never have got off the ground. But, as Richard Price has stressed, working-class support for this war was essentially a myth.²⁶ The absence of mass opposition to the war has been taken as proof of working-class support for imperialism, whereas a far more telling factor was the inadequacy of the organisations which attempted to build that opposition. 'The nature and methods of the anti-war committees, the paralytic dissension within the Liberal Party, explain the impotence of opposition to the war far more satisfactorily than imperial patriotism.'²⁷ Price clearly shows that interest in the war was widespread, that working-class

papers gave it as much space as the others, that their clubs debated it, and, overwhelmingly, the anti-war proponents won the day. Yet this did not generate a mass movement against the war, for the simple reason that the leaders of the agitation expressed their objections in moral terms which were not suited to appeal to a working-class audience. They argued a conspiracy theory in which the war arose from the machinations and ambitions of specific capitalists on the Rand, with Chamberlain as their tool. Working men, however, other than the politically active, did not think in terms of right or wrong; their opposition to the war stemmed from the view that imperialism conflicted with social reform at home, that money spent on the war could have been spent on old age pensions or housing. Thus the London Trades Council noted that 'we have always during this parliament a Foreign question thrust forward with the earnest intention of diverting the attention of the country from home affairs.'²⁸ The anti-war Radicals of the South African Conciliation Committee and the Stop-the-War Committee rarely related the two issues and therefore did not speak the language of working-class radicalism. Pro-Boers within the Liberal Party accentuated fears of a split in the party and failed therefore to establish a base for an anti-war crusade. This failure of leadership led to working-class apathy on the question and encouraged ambivalent attitudes to the war; anti-war resolutions co-existed with participation in jingo 'entertainment', Trades Councils would express opposition

to the war but shout down suggestions of British brutality which implied an attack on working-class soldiers. Labour organs such as the Yorkshire Factory Times therefore attempted to remain neutral on the issue.

Rothstein correctly identified an issue which could be exploited, given the political will and leadership. Price suggests that one of the reasons for the failure of the anti-war committees was their identification with the 'extremism' of the SDF, 'which continued to be devoid of any large-scale popular following'.²⁹ Yet the Federation had often shown itself capable of mobilising support far beyond the confines of its own membership for single issue campaigns such as free speech, unemployment and the feeding of schoolchildren. In Battersea supporters of the war rarely got a hearing and the SDF was 'the most active and dynamic element in the anti-war movement.'³⁰ The failure of the SDF was, in fact, the failure of the anti-war movement as a whole, for

The Socialists never attempted to place the war in any wider context; never regarded it as a result of the needs of British capitalism as a whole. The conspiracy theory appealed to both Liberals and Socialists.³¹

Thus Hyndman's efforts to shift blame for the war on to the shoulders of a few, largely Jewish, capitalists chimed in well with the arguments of the Radicals. A Socialist analysis of

the war was largely lacking in the pages of Justice after the early months of 1900, and the connection with domestic issues was rarely made. Yet in the so-called 'Khaki' election of 1900 Lansbury, standing for the SDF in Bow and Bromley on a platform of social reform and opposition to the war, polled 37 per cent of the votes cast as compared with 33 per cent for the Liberal candidate in 1899.³² That result and the success of the anti-war campaign in Battersea demonstrated the potential for a broad-based opposition to the war but the Social-Democratic Federation, like its Radical counterparts, lacked leadership. Hyndman certainly had the charisma to lead such a crusade, as his election campaigns in Burnley showed, but his analysis of the war was flawed and his commitment dubious. Consequently, after its initial anti-war flourish, the Federation played down the war and in its later stages, when the concentration camps on the Rand and the loss of life amongst Boer women and children gave anti-war critics a new credibility, it can be held in part responsible for the failure of the anti-war movement.

Rather than adopt a militant campaign against the war the SDF seemingly accepted the impossibility of such a task and fell back upon the conclusion that fusion with the ILP was the solution to the Socialist crisis.³³ It was hardly surprising that the SDF and ILP should move closer together in 1900, and they even ran joint candidates at Rochdale and Blackburn, but Clarke and Snowden suffered the same fate as the Federation's own candidates, Lansbury and Thorne, in East London. In the

face of the defeat of the anti-war forces at this election the abstention of one million Liberal voters went unnoticed. Instead the SDF, preoccupied with its declining membership figures, began to rethink its policy. As early as May 1900 the London District Council had considered that 'the S.D.F. have successfully vindicated the right of Free Speech' and should now return 'to advocating the principles of Social-Democracy.'³⁴ As the war dragged on and a long guerilla struggle seemed inevitable Hyndman too began to waver. In a letter to Gaylord Wiltshire he wrote that 'I begin to doubt whether we shall win this South African War, whether, in fact, it will turn out the beginning of the downfall of the British Empire.'³⁵ Such a prospect filled him with alarm and he persuaded the SDF executive to pass a resolution to the effect that further anti-war agitation would be a waste of time and a distraction from Socialist agitation.³⁶ As he declared in Justice, 'the business of the Social-Democratic Federation is to spread Socialism,' which alone could prevent further outbreaks of war.

Hyndman had reverted to the traditional propagandist stance of the SDF. Socialism would arrive when the message had been sufficiently preached, when enough converts had been made; issues such as Imperialism could only be solved by the advent of Socialism and therefore to campaign against the war was a diversion from the Socialist task. His national feelings pushed him towards such an attitude. He had signed a manifesto against the war put out by the International Socialist

Bureau, but now felt that this had encouraged a 'strong Continental prejudice against England'. Thus he defended the British troops in South Africa, pointing out that the atrocities committed by Russia in Manchuria, Germany and France in China, and France and Belgium in Central Africa 'far surpassed anything of which England has been guilty in South Africa.'³⁷ In defence of Hyndman it must be emphasised that he was also motivated by a feeling that the African natives stood to lose as much at the hands of the Boer settlers as they did at the hands of British imperialists, and he resolved therefore to agitate for the independence of these 'splendid native tribes'. Nonetheless, at a time when the appalling conditions in the South African concentration camps were drawing new recruits into the pro-Boer camp, Hyndman's attitude seemed an abdication of responsibility. The counter-attack was immediate and SDF unity was shattered.

Bax protested at Hyndman's surrender to 'the weak and beggarly elements of British chauvinism', but Rothstein, rapidly emerging as a powerful opponent of Hyndman, pinpointed the fallacies of his argument. Such a conception of Socialism, he said, was

at variance with everything that goes by that name
....Socialism cannot be spread but must be fought
for and won....We may preach our doctrines from to-
day till doomsday, but so long as we, from a false
conception of our duties as Socialists, or from

other causes hold ourselves aloof from
the momentous issues that agitate society, our
efforts will be vain and fruitless.

To Rothstein Hyndman's views were 'so clearly explanative of our failures in the past' and they presaged little hope for the future.³⁸ At the Federation's Annual Conference in 1901 Rothstein was elected top of the poll for the new executive and more momentously still Hyndman announced his resignation. This was undoubtedly a significant victory for the anti-war, internationalist forces, and the first major challenge to Hyndman's authority since the days of the Socialist League. It was, though, a rather illusory victory and did not indicate any fundamental transformation of the SDF. Hyndman's defeat was only temporary and in any event his resignation had been motivated as much by disillusionment with the results of twenty years of Socialist agitation as by his setback over the war.³⁹ These events demonstrated the heterogeneous nature of the SDF, the diversity of views gathered under its banner. They coincided with the 'impossibilist' challenge to the leadership, motivated by 'a new generation of members who felt that Hyndman, who was now almost sixty, and most of his immediate colleagues were too old a leadership for a revolutionary party'.⁴⁰ T. A. Jackson certainly felt that Hyndman was as much to blame for the schism as any issues of principle or policy. 'We were tired of a policy dictated by the old man which varied with his moods,' he said, and criticised Hyndman's amazing knack of 'rubbing people up the wrong way'.⁴¹ The Scottish District

Council was a stronghold of opposition to the war and had also spearheaded the campaign against affiliation to the Labour Representation Committee. Their views now posed a serious threat to party unity.

Withdrawal from the LRC had been welcomed by the impossibilists but it did not signify a victory for their cause; they had been defeated on all other counts at the 1901 party conference. But that conference had enabled the Scottish dissidents to make contact with oppositionists in England, principally in Oxford, Reading and London. For the next three years the SDF was plagued by internal feuding, as impossibilists and supporters of reaffiliation to the LRC attacked party policy. The lines of demarcation were not always clearly drawn, partly reflecting the muddled thinking of many SDFers, but once again three divergent strands of opinion emerged. The impossibilists favoured a distinct revolutionary party, one which would establish its own, separate, Social-Democratic trade unions. Those previously referred to as 'orthodox-Marxists', of whom Quelch was pre-eminent, also wanted a vanguard party, free from entangling political alliances, but they wished to work within existing trade unions, to convert them to Socialism. They drew a sharp distinction between the economic and political spheres of activity. On the right of the party, which does not imply a lack of commitment to revolutionary Socialism, were those who favoured rejoining the Labour Representation Committee

so that the Federation could more effectively influence the unions. Prominent in this group were Herbert Burrows, A. A. Watts, Dan Irving in Burnley and John Moore in Rochdale, with powerful support from Max Beer, the German Socialist historian and Vorwarts correspondent in Britain.

Rothstein launched the debate shortly after the 1901 Conference. Professing his disappointment at the need to write such an article after 20 years of the SDF's existence he savagely attacked the 'unholy Scotch current' for their 'treason to Socialism'. He argued forcefully for a synthesis of political and economic action, for 'Socialism, professing the principle of class war, but taking no part in it...is a mere ideal - good enough and noble enough to inspire individuals, but utterly inaccessible to the masses.'⁴² The class war was the connecting link between Socialism and trade unionism. Rothstein admitted that the situation in England was 'highly abnormal', largely because in this country's historical development the unions had preceded Socialism, but to argue for a perpetuation of that split on the grounds of principle was, he fulminated, 'a total misconception as to what the necessary conditions for a successful Socialist movement are'.⁴³ He regarded the impossibilists as political 'virgins, who, for the sake of their immaculate chastity, are ever ready to immolate themselves on the altar of sterility.'⁴⁴ Yet, whilst arguing that the Taff Vale case provided an ideal opportunity for Socialists to improve their relations with the unions, Rothstein stopped short

of supporting reaffiliation to the LRC. That would be a surrender of principle. The SDF should steer a careful path between the 'scylla of boneless opportunism and the charybdis of ossified impossibilism.'⁴⁵ His attack on the impossibilists received powerful support from Herbert Burrows, but in attacking them Burrows also implicitly criticised much of the SDF's policy and activities:

Faith without works is dead, and unless we are prepared to translate our faith into practical work by active participation in the political actualities of the day, we simply become a sect, with a set of dead dogmas instead of a living faith; a sect with a fervent enthusiasm and a sublime belief in its dogmas, it may be, but nevertheless a sect, cut off from the great world of men and life by its superior indifference to life's actualities, and left in a splendid isolation to declaim its abstract theories to an ever-dwindling number of the faithful.⁴⁶

This, of course, accurately represented the SDF's position at this time, for membership had dropped sharply since 1897. Moreover Burrows echoed Rothstein's criticisms of the party's attitude to the Boer war, but in so doing drew different conclusions. He supported reaffiliation to the LRC as the only way of participating in the 'political actualities of the day'

and extending Socialist influence. In this he was supported by Max Beer, who predicted great opportunities for the Social-Democratic Federation if it would only consider theory as a 'living guide' rather than a 'sacred letter', if it would cease shouting 'class struggle' yet practically standing aloof from it. Marxism, Beer argued, was never meant to become the religion of a sect. The trade unions were carrying on the class struggle, albeit unconsciously, and the SDF must be on their side. Hyndman would be of far more use inside Parliament than outside.⁴⁷ A. A. Watts expressed it more plainly. 'We cannot go out on to the street corner and the market place and urge the people to shake off their apathy and choose men of their own class to represent them, and then in our unions oppose the very action we have been advocating outdoors.'⁴⁸

Such views were anathema to the impossibilists. They would hear nothing of alliances with capitalist political parties which would be 'a desertion of the principle of antagonism.' Principle was their watchword, and individual reforms were mere tinkering with the capitalist system. Towards Rothstein they were more accommodating. His views were perfectly correct, said John Robertson, but they disputed his strategy of 'boring from within', which was a mere 'bolstering up the present fakir-ridden trade unions.'⁴⁹ On the grounds that many of the working class were disillusioned with the existing trade unions they argued for the formation of separate Socialist trade unions, through which they should attempt to reform and

bring over the other trade unions. Quelch was scathing in his reply. Such a policy would simply antagonise the very people they wished to win, he said. What was needed was a conversion of the rank and file, then the leadership of the unions could be ignored.

As the debate became more heated William Gee, the Scottish organiser, attempted to mediate. He vigorously defended the Scottish critics, praising them for their 'inexhaustible supply of energy' and their 'intense love for the cause'.⁵⁰ He contrasted the militant revolutionary spirit of the New York People with the flaccid and moderate tones of Justice. Why did a supposedly revolutionary Socialist newspaper praise the likes of Keir Hardie, mourn the death of Fred Hammill - an inveterate critic of the SDF - and regret the non-election of J. Havelock Wilson, the seaman's leader, to Parliament? These 'so-called impossibilists' were not wreckers, he said, but the most zealous of workers for the cause and the only grounds for conflict that he could see was over the question of alliances. His efforts were in vain and eventually he found his position untenable and he resigned as organiser. The first tangible result of the dispute was a schism in the ranks of the Edinburgh SDF. Long-standing members such as Cocker, Gunn, and John Leslie, an outspoken critic of the impossibilists, formed a new Edinburgh East branch of the Federation so as 'to remove the very strained relations which have existed for some time in the ranks of the Social-

Democrats of the city.'⁵¹ The tensions in Edinburgh were mirrored on a wider scale at the national conference in 1902. Attempts by the Burnley and Nelson branches to obtain re-affiliation to the LRC were defeated, but a Yates resolution arguing for separate Social-Democratic trade unions was thrown out by 70 votes to 10. SDF policy remained that of friendly relations with the unions, co-operation for immediate objects, but no political alliance. Hyndman savaged the impossibilists as 'Anarchists in Socialist clothing' who demonstrated the 'exquisite rancour of the theological mind'. Repeating the charge he had levelled at Henry Champion in the 1880s he accused them of trying to make '12 o'clock at 11', conveniently forgetting that William Morris had charged him with the self same thing.

The leadership did not have things all its own way. Three impossibilists were elected to the new Executive - Jack Kent, Alexander Anderson and Len Cotton. After the Conference closer working links were established between London and Scotland. In August 1902 the Scottish District Council launched its own paper, The Socialist, which soon proved a thorn in the side of the Hyndmanites. Patience finally exhausted Percy Friedberg of the Finsbury Park branch, the liaison agent between the London and Scottish dissidents, was expelled for publishing a criticism of the Official Conference Report. His branch supported him and were expelled en bloc. But the London impossibilists were relatively weak and the leading activists such as Jack Fitzgerald and Con Lehane advised others

not to follow suit. They decided to adopt the tactics of their Scottish comrades and bore from within to capture the London District Council. The Scots though were now ready to go further. Convinced after the 1902 Conference that the SDF could not be transformed from within, they were further enraged by the publication of an Open Letter to the King on the occasion of Edward VII's coronation, which declared that 'The great and growing popularity of the king is not undeserved' and which urged him to use his influence for the well-being of the English people. The expulsion of Yates at the 1903 Conference for his attacks on the Executive in The Socialist, and the fact that no impossibilist was elected to the Executive, hastened their decision.

In May 1903 The Socialist announced the formation of the Socialist Labour Party, a choice of name which emphasised its debt to American influence, and the inaugural conference was held in Edinburgh in June. The founders had hoped for the secession of the entire Scottish membership of the SDF, but in the event only the activists on and around the District Council did so. There were initially four branches of the new party, at Edinburgh, Falkirk, Glasgow and Leith, soon reinforced by Kirkcaldy, Southampton and the Bethnal Green branch of the SDF, which was dissolved in June. The majority of the London impossibilists did not follow the Bethnal Green example, even though Leonard Cotton and Ernest Hunter were also expelled at the 1903 Conference. Hunter became the London agent for the

Scottish party. Others hesitated; they distrusted the secret machinations of the Scottish men and questioned the financial stability of The Socialist. They felt that they had not been properly consulted and, as Jack Fitzgerald put it, 'The London section were no more ready to blindly follow would-be geniuses from Scotland than "highly educated" leaders from Queen Anne's Gate (Hyndman's residence)!'⁵² The London rebels decided to continue the struggle to reform the SDF, but they were now faced with an intransigent Executive determined to clear the party of malcontents. At the 1904 Conference a resolution was passed calling upon the impossibilists to apologise for having pursued disruptive tactics. They refused and the leading members, Hawkins and Fitzgerald, were expelled because of their 'campaign of calumny and intrigue against the Executive Committee and therefore against the whole organisation by which it was elected.'⁵³ London members endorsed this decision by 119 votes to 83 and consequently supporters of the two men held a meeting on 12 June 1904. There the formation of the Socialist Party of Great Britain was announced.

The SDF lost some 80 members to the Socialist Labour Party and 88 to the SPGB. Both the new parties struggled yet both survived. The SLP's strength was centred largely in Scotland, particularly on Clydeside, and the SPGB remained largely confined to London. The SLP developed along the lines of industrial unionism, played an important role in the struggles on Clydeside during the First World War, and eventually formed a major component of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

The SPGB boasted 142 members upon its formation and declared itself 'The beginning of the modern revolutionary movement.'⁵⁴ It refused to adopt any palliatives in its programme and in effect became a complete 'impossibilist' party which was, as Tsuzuki has remarked, 'the logical conclusion of the impossibilist revolt'. In spite of, or perhaps because of this, the party has survived to the present day. As for the Social-Democratic Federation it emerged from the revolt somewhat shaken, depleted in numbers in Scotland, London and a couple of other centres, but with the 'old guard' and centre of the party firmly in the saddle. Yet the central dilemmas of the party remained unresolved. The question of reform as opposed to revolution was no nearer a satisfactory conclusion, the relationship of the party to the trade unions remained in the air, and Hyndman and his friends retained control. As in 1884 the SDF had shown its tendency to fissure at moments of crisis rather than absorb new principles and ideas or adapt to changed circumstances. The impossibilists were purged, the proponents of reaffiliation to the Labour Representation Committee had rallied to the Executive in the face of the impossibilist onslaught and were now quiescent. There seemed little chance of a fundamental shift in direction. Indeed the party resurrected two of its traditional themes as focii for agitation. The centre was strengthened by the Dewsbury by-election result, which was regarded as a good augury for Socialist unity, and the rising level of unemployment led the party to renew its unemployed agitation. Yet the impossibilists had represented

a new generation of members, less willing to accept the dictates of Hyndman and company and that alone was significant. Rothstein, Gee, and others remained in the party to challenge the 'old guard'. Hazell, the London compositor, neatly summed up the situation. 'We have not to change our policy', he said, 'so much as to define it'.⁵⁵

NOTES.

1. See, for example, Justice, 7 July and 22 September 1894.
2. Ibid., 11 January 1896.
3. Ibid., 4, 11 January and 25 April 1896.
4. Ibid., 18 January 1896.
5. Ibid., 7 March 1896.
6. B. Baker, The Social Democratic Federation and the Boer War, Our History Pamphlet 59, Summer 1974, p.4.
7. Justice, 10 April 1897.
8. Ibid., 17 June 1899.
9. Ibid., 30 September 1899.
10. Ibid., 7 October 1899.
11. Ibid., 1 July 1899.
12. Ibid., 9 July 1898.
13. Ibid., 21 October 1899.
14. Ibid., 7 October and 14 October 1899.
15. Ibid., 28 October 1899 and 1 May 1900.
16. The SDF was not alone in drawing on racial prejudice for its condemnation of capitalism. Blatchford drew heavily on national stereotypes for his version of Socialism, but even the strongly anti-war ILP was not immune, arguing that

In whatever walk of life the Jew adopts
he generally becomes pre-eminent, and the
stock exchange Jew is no exception to
the rule. He is the incarnation of the

money idea, and it is no exaggeration
to say that the Jew financier controls
the policy of Europe'.

ILP News, October 1899.

17. See Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, pp.127-8.
18. Justice, 6 January 1900.
19. Ibid., 13 and 20 January 1900.
20. Ibid., 20 January 1900.
21. Baker, op.cit., p.6.
22. See, for example, Justice, 28 October and 11 November 1899.
23. Ibid., 6 and 27 January 1900.
24. Ibid., 7 April 1900.
25. Ibid., 14 April 1900.
26. R. Price, An Imperial War and the British Working Class,
(1972).
27. Ibid., p.15.
28. London Trades Council Minutes, 10 August 1899, quoted in
Price, op.cit., p.74.
29. Price, op.cit., p.44.
30. Ibid., p.171.
31. Ibid., p.71.
32. Lansbury polled 2,558 votes, the Conservative candidate
4,403.
33. Justice, 21 April 1900.
34. Ibid., 26 May 1900.
35. Hyndman to Gaylord Wiltshire, 20 September 1901, quoted
in Baker, op.cit., p.10.

36. Justice, 13 April 1901.
37. Ibid., 23 November 1901.
38. Ibid., 27 July 1901.
39. Ibid., 10 August 1901. See also Hyndman to Neil Maclean, 3 September 1900, quoted in Challinor, op.cit., p.14.
40. Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, p.133.
41. Jackson, Solo Trumpet, (1953), p.66.
42. Justice, 21 September 1901.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., 30 August 1902.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 29 March 1902.
47. Ibid., 26 July 1902.
48. Ibid., 5 July 1902.
49. Ibid., 5 October 1901.
50. Ibid., 24 August 1901.
51. Ibid., 16 November 1901.
52. Socialist Standard, August 1906, quoted in Tsuzuki, 'The "Impossibilist" Revolt in Britain', p.393.
53. Justice, 9 April 1904.
54. Barltrop, op.cit., pp.8 and 14.
55. Justice, 23 August 1902.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RIGHT TO WORK.

The decision to secede from the LRC left the SDF urgently seeking a defined and coherent policy. Federation spokesmen rationalised their position as a mid-course between reformism and impossibilism, adopting a long-term perspective for the attainment of Socialism and counselling their followers to be patient. 'The true Socialist policy, like truth', said Quelch, 'lies in the middle'.¹ They should use direct action and political action as complementary facets of a single policy, organising to win the working class and build a Social-Democratic party. Yet fine-sounding phrases could not disguise the essential incoherence of the SDF position, and the attempt to define a middle road led to both immobility and muddle. Between 1901 and 1910 the Federation acted, in Pierson's words, as 'a kind of conscience'² for the wider movement but it also struggled with its own conscience in an attempt to justify its separate existence. Unemployment was the focus of SDF attention in these years, and its campaigns highlighted the problems it faced operating outside the Labour Party. The Federation was able to mobilise mass protests and force concessions from both local authorities and the Government, but it failed to attract new recruits to its own organisation in large numbers. It gave the lead to the wider movement on the question of unemployment only to find itself pre-empted by the ILP and the Labour Party. Once again, as on the question of free speech for example, the SDF found that

single-issue campaigns brought temporary success but no long-term gains. In this case the party's failure could be explained by its position outside the Labour Party. The refusal of MacDonald and Glasier to sanction co-operation with the SDF, union suspicions of the Federation, and the fears aroused by the sometimes violent demonstrations negated its earlier successes. Some compensation was provided by the fact that their campaigns did attract dissident ILPers and encouraged moves towards the formation of the British Socialist Party.

In his autobiography Hyndman noted that unemployment had always been a prime concern of the SDF. 'Nearly all our principal agitations, demonstrations and collisions with the "authorities" have arisen from our efforts in this direction.'³ In its early years the Federation had seen the organisation of the unemployed as a short cut to social revolution, using the spectre of revolt to frighten the authorities. Their campaigns were also concerned with 'palliatives', pressurising local authorities to provide improved relief scales, meals for schoolchildren and the like as a means of producing a fitter and more politically aware working class. As Alan Kidd has noted, the SDF showed a 'perceptive (if confused) awareness of the decentralised character of much State power in the nineteenth century',⁴ a feature which persisted until 1909 as far as unemployment was concerned. Historians who concentrate on national developments and central government

policy ignore the sometimes every effective campaigns initiated by the SDF in the localities. Obviously Socialist agitation amongst the unemployed fluctuated with the cycle of unemployment itself, and the ebbs and flows of the campaigns often seemed mere propaganda exercises producing few results and even fewer recruits. William Morris had despaired of such efforts after Bloody Sunday and, as the dreams of imminent revolution faded, the SDF efforts became much more localised affairs, a means of propaganda, of making members, and of pressing for palliatives. The Federation's concentration on municipal electioneering was intimately connected with such demonstrations, for Socialists on local councils and Boards of Guardians could carry the fight into the municipal chambers.

Initially the SDF's had been very much a lone voice in its demands for state intervention to tackle the problem of poverty and unemployment. The demand for the Eight-Hour Day, for example, first raised by the Federation in the early 1880s, was opposed by many who feared resulting lower wages and foreign competition. There was also disagreement over whether such a reform would be achieved by legislation or by industrial action. But just as the Eight-Hour Day became increasingly accepted in working-class circles so too was there a growing recognition that neither the Poor Law nor the charities were doing more than scratching the surface of the problem of poverty. The writings of Jack London, the surveys of Booth and

Rowntree, the rejection of unfit recruits at the time of the Boer War, all contributed to an awareness of the problem, and certainly in the Labour movement it was accepted that the question of unemployment was fundamental to the whole question of poverty. There was, however, no agreed solution. Reform of the land laws, labour colonies, schemes of national works at times of high unemployment, all had their adherents. But few agreed with the Socialists that unemployment was inseparable from the capitalist system and that the abolition of capitalism was therefore the only panacea. Nonetheless there was a basic assumption that all men possessed a natural right to work and that the State, as the operator of the economic system, should be responsible for supporting the unemployed and thereby removing the stigmas of pauperism and charity. It was in this context that the SDF embarked upon its unemployed agitation of the early 1900s.

The demobilisation of soldiers after the Boer War led to an upsurge in unemployment, and the SDF was the first organisation to take up the soldiers' cause, organising a demonstration in Hyde Park in June 1902. The Government's lack of concern over the problem, relegating it to a very minor position compared to the more pressing concerns of housing and temperance, prompted the ILP to convene a meeting at the end of the year. From this emerged the National Unemployed Committee, a mixture of Radicals and Labour men, which aimed to agitate for the establishment of a government department

to deal solely with the provision of work for the unemployed. A two-day conference called by the committee in February 1903 was marked by long and often contradictory speeches and pious resolutions. The SDF had not been invited to participate, a measure of its isolation at this time, and it regarded the conference as irrelevant. It had organised its own London committee early in 1903 with the aim of spurring the unemployed into action; daily demonstrations were to be held in the West End, culminating in a rally in Trafalgar Square on the 14th of February, the eve of Parliament's reassembly. The aim, said Justice, was that 'pressure from without' would force the Government to take action.⁵ This indeed it did, but not that which the Federation anticipated. According to Kenneth Brown, 'there can be little doubt that the campaign was successful in mobilising London's unemployed and in causing a great deal of inconvenience to the authorities and the general public'.⁶ Alarmed by the threat to public order and the increasing strains on police manpower the Government introduced a bill banning the collection of money at such demonstrations. This money had been shared out amongst the marchers and the removal of such a 'carrot' undoubtedly reduced the SDF's effectiveness in organising the unemployed. Perennially short of money itself, and also preoccupied with its internal debates over the value of such short-term objectives, the campaign fizzled out in the summer of 1903. Yet it had not been entirely unsuccessful; public awareness had been heightened,

charitable appeals renewed and the National Unemployed Committee was reconvened in October, though partly as a response to ILP fears of an SDF takeover of the movement.

Throughout 1904 unemployment was abnormally high and there was every expectation of record figures during the winter of 1904-05. A number of local authorities, including Bradford and Manchester, made provision for this whilst the TUC pressured both local councils and Government to act. The SDF had originally intended to launch a post-Christmas agitation to coincide with the opening of Parliament, but in September the Federation decided to press for a special session of Parliament to deal solely with unemployment. Branches were urged to carry out street by street censuses to provide statistical evidence to lay before the Government, and to pressurise the local authorities to provide additional relief. It was anticipated that local events would lead the councils to join the clamour for government action. 'Let us break down the Poor Law by sending the unemployed to the workhouses to demand admission', proclaimed Justice. 'Above all, let us vigorously proceed with the canvass...we shall simply stagger humanity.'⁷ A conference of London Guardians on 14 October was petitioned to support the call for a special session of Parliament, and urged to establish labour colonies and the Eight-Hour Day. Only five Boards of Guardians could be persuaded to support the SDF resolution, and the Federation was aghast at the proposals emanating from the conference. The scheme envisaged farm colony districts for London, each

with its own committee, overseen by a central co-ordinating body. The Local Government Board would pay administrative expenses and the councils could make a contribution from the rates. Three criticisms were voiced by the SDF. They argued that the committee system was too slow, that all boroughs should share the burden, not simply those where unemployment was high, and that the financial arrangements were far too loose. Its criticisms were proved well-founded when, at the first meeting of the Central Body, it was agreed to raise funds through voluntary subscriptions rather than from the rates, leading Hyndman to claim that the scheme was designed not to work.

As unrest increased the SDF was much to the fore in the localities. In Bradford⁸ the workhouse was besieged early in November by 2,000 people demanding work, and the pressure of agitation persuaded the Education Committee to agree to the feeding of needy schoolchildren. In Leeds nightly processions of the unemployed led to disorderly scenes, window smashing and attacks on the police. The City Council called a special conference to discuss the issue and agreed to provide work for the unemployed. It also supported the call for a special session of Parliament.⁹ Such events were repeated in towns throughout the country, and in Manchester the SDF proved itself capable of mobilising a mass movement which 'in a remarkably short period of time...achieved quite striking results'.¹⁰ The SDF campaign was centred around the labour

registry, the municipal agency responsible for the collection of names for the allocation of relief work. Manchester City Council had been reluctant to reopen the registry after the winter of 1903, fearing that the assembly of hundreds of men at one centre was an invitation to trouble. Two SDF activists, Hitchen and Skivington, led demonstrations on 14 and 16 November 1904 culminating in a deputation to the Lord Mayor, and they secured a promise that the labour registry would reopen. This early success gained the confidence of the unemployed and the SDF was able to mobilise meetings of up to 5,000 men. A threatened march on the Board of Guardians produced a temporary increase in outdoor-relief scales from four shillings to six shillings, whilst pressure on the local authority as over 3,000 men registered for work led to relief work for over 600 within a week. 'The SDF campaign to pressurise the local authorities into expanding relief provision had in the short term proved remarkably successful,'¹¹ and, just as in London in 1886, donations to the Lord Mayor's Relief Fund rose sharply.

However the SDF leadership was anxious to achieve a national stage for their propaganda, which aimed to identify central government responsibility for the unemployed. Branches were urged to petition local M.Ps and the Prime Minister¹² for a special session of Parliament. Meetings were held at respectable venues to organise public opinion. The SDF co-operated with the London Trades Council and the Parliamentary

Committee of the TUC in calling a Guildhall Conference on State maintenance. Justice cautioned against violent language at unemployed demonstrations.¹³ Meanwhile both the ILP and LRC had taken up the issue, the ILP with a series of public rallies and the LRC with a special conference on unemployment. As a result the SDF found itself marginalised. Kenneth Brown correctly argues that

Once the TUC, the ILP and the LRC began to interest themselves seriously in the unemployment problem it was almost inevitable that the voice of the much smaller SDF would be drowned. But this should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the campaign for a special parliamentary session at the end of 1904 was started by the Social Democrats.¹⁴

Moreover, the rising levels of unemployment and fears of violent unrest, fuelled it must be said by the SDF agitation in Bradford, Manchester and elsewhere, prompted the Government in January 1905 to decide to introduce an Act of Parliament to tackle the problem. Walter Long, President of the Local Government Board, and Sir Arthur Clay, a leading figure in the Charity Organisation Society, later acknowledged the role of the Federation in bringing pressure to bear on the Government.¹⁵ Yet the Government's decision similarly elbowed the SDF from the limelight, for the SDF had no representation in Parliament whereas both the TUC and the ILP

had. With some justification the Federation complained at its 1905 Conference that it had gained little recognition for its efforts on behalf of the unemployed.

The SDF's national campaign had, to a considerable degree, diminished its own effectiveness. Attention was diverted from the local arena, and pressure on the local authorities relaxed. As Kidd comments, 'It is tempting to wonder what would have happened if the SDF had persisted with its campaign to pressurise the local authorities rather than switching to more "constitutional" channels and national objectives'.¹⁶

The question illustrates the Federation's dilemma - was it an agitational, revolutionary body or was it to function as a conventional political party seeking seats in Parliament and operating through the normal channels? For the moment it concentrated its efforts on the national campaign by the Labour and Socialist movement over the Conservative government's Unemployed Workmen Bill. Although the Labour and Socialist parties had a number of criticisms of the Bill the fact that, as initially proposed, it involved the raising of money from the rates gave some cause for satisfaction. According to Quelch the Bill had a twofold significance: it accepted the State's responsibility for the unemployed and it meant the unification of London for rating purposes.¹⁷

The reaction of the Labour movement generally was one of cautious optimism. However timid the Bill it at least established the principle of State maintenance. But

under fire from its own supporters the Government denied any such intention. It delayed the second reading of the Bill, an act which revived the extra-parliamentary pressure. James Gribble of the SDF led a march of unemployed bootmakers from Northampton to London, a pioneering Right to Work march, which was quickly emulated by a group of Leicester unemployed. The Raunds march in particular attracted considerable attention, and it marked a reversal to direct action by the SDF. The Federation scathingly attacked the performance of the Labour M.Ps in Parliament, accusing them of 'pusillanimity and cowardice' over the question of unemployment. 'They no longer regard themselves as agitators, with the House of Commons as their battle-ground', said Justice, they simply used it as 'a haven of rest'.¹⁸ Whatever the merits of the Labour M.Ps, direct action proved remarkably effective in July, for a riot in Manchester caused the Government to reactivate its Bill and to announce a Royal Commission to investigate the Poor Law and the whole question of poverty. On 31 July a mass meeting of the unemployed was held in Albert Square, Manchester, with Victor Grayson as the main speaker. After the meeting Skivington and Smith of the SDF led a parade up Market Street, blocking it to traffic, whereupon the police attacked and dispersed the crowd with batons. According to the Manchester Evening Chronicle the scenes had had 'no parallel in the history of the city since the dreadful days of Peterloo'.¹⁹ The riot directly influenced the Government, for Balfour of course represented a Manchester constituency. The Unemployed

Workmen Bill was steered through the Commons on 7 August, but with a significant alteration. There was to be no rate aid and all money had to be raised from voluntary sources. The offer of a Royal Commission was, perhaps, a sop to the Labour forces who were certain to be antagonistic to this revised version.

The Manchester riot and its aftermath marked the peak of SDF influence in relation to the issue of unemployment. For a short while afterwards the Federation basked in the glow of unaccustomed popularity. When the ILP launched a National Right to Work Council in November 1905, the SDF was invited to participate and Quelch and Mrs. Cobden-Sanderson were both members. The SDF was instrumental in setting up a London Central Workers' Committee which aimed to press local councils to exploit the new legislation to its fullest extent. In Manchester an Unemployed Committee was established with delegates from the SDF, the ILP and the Trades Council. The Federation was able to get a number of its members on to the Distress committees set up to administer the Act, Skivington in Manchester and five in West Ham alone. Yet the warning signs were, or should have been apparent. Skivington and Smith were excluded from the new joint committee in Manchester, which was dominated by the ILP. Although Keir Hardie and a number of other ILPers supported demonstrations organised by the London Central Workers' Committee, Glasier, Snowden and MacDonald were opposed to any co-operation with the Social-

Democrats, believing 'that the matter is only another SDF dodge to hamper the LRC'.²⁰ Outside London the SDF was not strong enough to mount a national campaign and in the capital itself financial difficulties hampered the activities of the London Committee, which had to appeal for funds at the end of November. Yet during the next three years the SDF experienced an upsurge in its fortunes and was able to benefit from disillusionment with the performance of the Labour Party in Parliament. For a short period it was able to recapture the initiative on the question of unemployment.

The political context in which the SDF operated was radically altered with the landslide election of the Liberal Government in January 1906, and the arrival of 29 Labour M.Ps in the Commons. The subsequent change of name from the Labour Representation Committee to the Labour Party fuelled expectations of growth amongst Labour and Socialists alike. For the next three years all sections of the movement shared in a Socialist revival. Between 1906 and 1908 the SDF added 100 new branches to its total, claiming 232 in all with some 12,000 members. Its 21 seats on municipal bodies had risen to 124 by 1907. The Federation put two 'Red Vans' in the field, emulating those of the Clarion. Encouraged by this expansion the Social-Democrats became the Social-Democratic Party in 1907, emphasising their determination to build a

working-class party based on Marxism as a serious alternative to the reformism offered by the Labour Party. At election times it appealed to the immediate interests of the workers in the same manner as the ILP, but its militancy and theoretical seriousness appealed to many and enabled it to compete with its rival. As William Gallacher said of the ILP's ethical Socialism, 'They smacked too much of the Sunday School. They were too much like what we were...trying to get away from'.²¹ Nevertheless that ethical Socialism remained the most popular variant. The idea of Socialism as fellowship revived, the Labour Churches were reinvigorated, the circulation of the Clarion soared. Nowhere was Socialist expansion more marked than in Yorkshire, and here too the SDF was able to establish itself on a much firmer basis than hitherto. The Bradford branch was re-established and flourished, reporting over 100 members in February 1907.²² In Leeds the appointment of Bert Killip as organiser in October 1907 led to three new branches within six months. Hull could claim 100 members,²³ branches were formed in Keighley, Halifax, Rotherham, and Birkenhead, whilst the Federation stabilised and expanded its base in Sheffield. Nothing demonstrated more clearly this renewed vitality in the British Socialist Movement than the election of Victor Grayson as M.P. for the Colne Valley constituency in 1907.

Grayson's victory was rapturously received by the rank and file of both the ILP and the SDF but his was a contro-

versial candidature, sanctioned neither by the Labour Party nor by the ILP Council. There was an essential duality within the ILP in these years as their Socialist commitment clashed with their trade-union alliance. The goal of converting their trade union allies was increasingly postponed to a far distant future, particularly after the affiliation of the miners to the Labour Party, and the overwhelming majority of the Liberal Party in Parliament meant a hesitant and often supine approach on the part of the Labour M.Ps. Rank and file dissatisfaction increased, and the failure of the Labour Party in Parliament over the unemployment issue was a prime cause of discontent. As William Morris had predicted in the 1880s, the struggle for immediate gains or 'palliatives' would mean the postponement or even abandonment of the Socialists' ultimate vision. The dual impulses of the ILP began to separate under the pressure of its political role and members began to choose between the Socialist vision and the trade-union alliance. Some, such as H. Russell Smart and the Huddersfield ILP, attempted to challenge the leadership, to democratise the party, but this too failed. In the face of this disarray the SDF saw the chance to take the initiative. The leadership was convinced that the ILP's problems demonstrated the wisdom of their decision to withdraw from the LRC, and the Labour Party's manifest failure to force its Right to Work Bill through Parliament made it question too the efficacy of Parliamentary activity. A renewal of its street protests brought the Federation new supporters.

The greater part of the Social-Democratic Federation's political activity between 1905 and 1910 revolved around the question of unemployment. After the 1906 election very little was done by the new Liberal Government beyond vague expressions of sympathy for the unemployed. The expanded Labour group had no detailed policy on unemployment simply because it had never been in a position to introduce detailed legislation. The elevation of John Burns to the Local Government Board raised the hopes of some, but for the SDF his was 'the crowning act of treachery...he puts the seal upon his treason, and accepts the reward of his recreancy' by accepting a 'handsome Judas bribe' from his Liberal paymasters. Sharp divisions within the Liberal Cabinet meant a reluctance to act and consequently popular discontent once more reasserted itself. The SDF, which had previously counselled caution, raised echoes of Bloody Sunday as Fred Knee advised the unemployed to 'take back some of that which had been taken from them', and Jack Williams raged that 'If the capitalist class wanted riots then they should have them'.²⁵ They initiated a series of land-grabs, the occupation of private, uncultivated land by the unemployed. The first of these was in Manchester early in July 1906, when Arthur Smith of the SDF led some squatters onto church land. Jack Williams was sent north by the Executive to take charge of the operation, and Smith later repeated the

effort at Salford. Both camps were short-lived, the squatters being evicted. A similar attempt took place at Leeds, again on the initiative of Smith, where a so-called 'Libertarian camp' was established. This lasted but three days before being broken up by an organised gang of local toughs. At Plaistow in London Ben Cunningham of the SDF led 14 men onto some disused land owned by West Ham Corporation but they too were evicted within 3 weeks. More successful was the 'Klondyke camp' at Girdlington, Bradford. Organised by Councillor Glyde, a member of both the ILP and the SDF, the unemployed took possession of land owned by the Midland Railway company on 24 July 1906. Two days later they were joined by Arthur Smith and Alexander Stewart Gray, the prime mover in the land grab campaign and a prominent SDF organiser of the unemployed.²⁶ Some 30 men planted lettuce, celery, cauliflowers and turnips and even established a chip-chopping department to raise revenue, though the main aim was to attract public attention and publicise Government inactivity. The revolutionary rhetoric continued, with Glyde asserting that 'If the unemployed are going to get anything they will have to help themselves to the land and "other property"',²⁷ but in practice, as a local observer noted, the land grabs aimed 'to make the most of the opportunities afforded by the presence of curious onlookers of carrying on propaganda work.'²⁸ Curious onlookers there certainly were, Glyde reporting over 100,000 visitors to the Bradford camp before its demise at the beginning of October.

But it is clear that many of them regarded the proceedings as entertainment, even comedy, and the land grabs were of only minor value.²⁹ Significantly Will Thorne, the Federation's only Parliamentary representative, distanced himself from the Plaistow land grabbers and Justice gave little prominence to these events. The SDF had been willing to take advantage of the efforts of its local activists but once the attempts proved abortive the Federation returned its gaze to the national arena.

The Liberal Government's failure to include any measure concerned with unemployment in the 1907 King's speech finally persuaded the Labour Party to introduce its own Bill. It proposed a central unemployment committee to plan national relief works and the appointment of local commissioners for local works. Each local authority was to set up a committee to provide work for the unemployed and they were to be allowed to use money from the rates to pay the men so employed. The third clause stated the key principle, that of the right to work, and the Bill was popularly known as the Right To Work Bill. There was obviously no chance of success in 1907 because of the sheer weight of government business, but the Labour Party's aim was to publicise the Bill in order to put the Liberals under pressure for the 1908 session, the year the 1905 Act expired. John Burns condemned the Bill as a prescription for 'universal pauperism' but many of his cabinet colleagues were alarmed, both by the Socialist victories at

the by-elections in Jarrow and Colne Valley and by the rising unemployment figures caused by the financial crisis in the U.S.A. and poor harvests in several countries. They were pressured too by an effective Labour Party propaganda campaign, aimed partly at boosting its public image and partly at counter-acting left wing criticism of its parliamentary ineptitude. The SDF, comparatively quiescent since 1905, renewed its street campaigns with three major London demonstrations in November and December 1907. There were also major clashes with the police at a demonstration in Birmingham in January 1908. This combination of Labour pressure, public interest and unemployed violence obviously worried the Liberals. The Cabinet was divided on the issue and 70 Liberals joined Labour in opposing the King's speech. Hopes of success were therefore high, and disappointment all the more acute, when the Labour Party failed to seize the initiative. Pete Curran was successful in the ballot for private members' bills and he introduced an Eight Hours Bill, but he and his colleagues failed to point out that limited hours would provide more employment. As M.P.s awaited the next parliamentary session, ministerial changes suggested a new long-term unemployment policy from the Government.³⁰

Before 1908 the SDF had been hopeful of the Labour Party, arguing that whatever its shortcomings 'it certainly marks a political cleavage, and is the beginning of a definite working class Parliamentary movement'.³¹ After the 1908

Labour Party Conference at Hull had declared the ultimate objective of the party to be the realisation of Socialism even Hyndman voted in favour of SDF reaffiliation.³² But Labour Party ineptitude over the question of unemployment brought swift disillusionment. Initially favourably disposed towards the Labour Party Bill because it enshrined the Right to Work principle, the Federation now assailed Labour for failing to force the bill through Parliament by militant means. 'The Labour Party in the House of Commons seems to think that it has done its duty merely by introducing the bill', said Justice. The Social-Democrats saw Parliament simply as an extension of the propaganda platform, and thought it should be used as a complement to militant extra-parliamentary agitation. They attacked the Labour Party for acting as an ordinary bourgeois party, and ceaselessly extolled the example of the Irish M.P.s - 'they never forget, and never permit others to forget, that they regard themselves as a hostile party in a hostile assembly and they never lose sight of their ultimate object.'³⁴ Similar criticisms were voiced by the ILP Conference in April and by the Yorkshire Federation of Trades Councils. As the left wing of the ILP became increasingly restive, as the tide of industrial unrest increased, the SDF sought to appeal to the growing numbers of disillusioned Socialists, a policy which led eventually to the formation of the British Socialist Party. But, as Stanley Pierson has realised, it was a policy 'more reactive than creative; it

was shaped less by theory than by the rising currents of discontent within the Socialist and Labour movements.'³⁵ Moreover, the anti-parliamentary tendency within the Federation reasserted itself. After all, predictions of the collapse of capitalism were one way of reconciling their Socialist faith with the apparent trends of British social development.

By August 1908 unemployment had risen to 8.5 per cent of the male population, and militancy increased. In Glasgow and Bradford troops were placed on standby. Those in Bradford were to deal with any violent outbreaks arising from the visit to the city of Sydney Buxton, the Postmaster General. In the event, although several attempts were made to rush St. George's Hall, the police were able to cope quite adequately. Nonetheless furious scenes ensued in the council chamber as both Glyde and Hartley attempted to move the suspension of standing orders to discuss the requisitioning of troops. Hartley in particular used violent language. 'I am a man of peace', he told the Mayor, 'and believe in proceeding in a constitutional manner but if you shelve this matter in this cowardly manner I warn you that I shall have to take other steps; and that is no idle threat'. Later he called the Mayor a coward and, addressing the unemployed in the gallery, urged that 'For every one of you killed, demand a toll of two from the other class; take care that you aim high and hit the people who are responsible'.³⁶ Similar rhetoric was heard in Manchester, where the unemployed were urged to arm themselves

with 'knives, pokers and crowbars'. There were violent clashes with the police, and on one occasion Fleetwood, an SDF activist, was rescued by the crowd from police custody.³⁷

In many areas the SDF unemployed campaigns became also campaigns for free speech, whilst in the public mind they became associated with the question of public order. Even Will Thorne was prosecuted for incitement after telling his audience to help itself from bakers' shops if short of bread. The Federation threatened to 'make the unemployed a menace... institute a reign of terror...make the governing classes howl with affright at the danger to their skins and their stolen wealth'.³⁸

Temporarily the SDF was able to attract influential supporters from beyond its own ranks. Victor Grayson, both inside and outside Parliament, encouraged the unemployed to act for themselves and he was suspended from the Commons on 16 October 1908 for interrupting the committee stage of the Licensing Bill. M.P.s such as Curran, Seddon, Keir Hardie and Fred Jowett were prepared to co-operate with the SDF, sensing the need for militant pressure from without to back their parliamentary campaign. At a joint meeting on 19 October 1908 it was agreed to establish a Joint London Right to Work Committee to coordinate London activities. Its secretary was E. C. Fairchild of the Federation's Hackney branch. Although a constant critic of the Labour Party for much of the year the SDF was prepared to work with ILP M.P.s.

The Federation still hoped for Socialist unity, it supported the 'Right To Work' principle and, by mounting a joint campaign, it hoped to attract financial support it desperately needed. Thus encouraged the SDF organised a series of marches into the West End in December and January, which led to considerable disruption and the banning of a meeting in Belgrave Square on 25 January. A dual strategy of street politics and parliamentary agitation promised much, but the alliance lasted no later than February 1909. The key factor was the reaction of trade unionists against co-operation with the Social-Democrats; many Labour activists disapproved of the violent tactics employed by a number of SDFers and influential figures such as MacDonald and Snowden were always against working with the SDF. When the Federation's Oldham branch wrote to MacDonald castigating the Labour Party for its refusal to support Grayson over unemployment he retorted by attacking 'the general stupidity of the S.D.F. and its incapacity to understand the meaning of any political demonstration' and thought the party composed merely of 'stupid tub-thumpers'.³⁹ With Grayson increasingly acting as a focus for critics of the Labour Party, with Curran and Snowden shouted down at Bradford and Liverpool when they attempted to defend Labour's unemployment policy,⁴⁰ the ILP element which had been prepared to co-operate with the Federation withdrew its support. As Brown comments, 'they were certainly not prepared to see their life's work, the creation of an independent working class party, destroyed'.⁴¹

By 1909 the Labour Party's commitment to the Right to Work Bill had begun to dissipate. In many respects its bill had been a statement of principle intended to mobilise public opinion, rather than a clearly defined statement of practical policy. More concrete schemes for providing work were appearing, for example the Government's development bill, passed in the autumn of 1909, and many Labour men agreed with the Government that curbing the power of the Lords and passing Lloyd George's budget were more urgent priorities. Of prime importance was the report of the Poor Law Commission early in 1910, more particularly of the Minority Report⁴² which was welcomed by all sections of the movement except the SDF. Whereas the 'Right to Work Bill' provided a single solution to a single problem, the Minority Report covered the whole spectrum of poverty and contained proposals such as the creation of a Labour Ministry and a reduction of hours which had long figured in Labour programmes. Significantly there was no reference to the right to work, hence SDF opposition, and the Federation also objected to the proposal to abolish the Boards of Guardians and transfer their powers to the local authorities, which they regarded as mere 'bureaucratic democracy'.⁴³ The final straw for the SDF came after the January 1910 election. With 40 Labour and 80 Irish M.P.s holding the balance of power it was widely anticipated that the Labour Party would use its position to force through the 'Right to Work Bill'. Such hopes were held in vain. The Labour Party's fear of bringing

down the Government, its preoccupation with the Osborne judgement, the feeling that proposed Government legislation made the bill much less relevant, all played a part in this decision. So too did the relative economic recovery after 1909, a factor which further diminished SDF influence. The Labour Party was also engaged in monitoring the new Labour exchanges established by Beveridge, a system bitterly attacked by the SDF as a state organised system of blacklegging but one which many trade unionists cautiously welcomed. Such inertia enraged the left. Through the Clarion Blatchford raged at the desertion of the unemployed,⁴⁴ and, significantly, Leonard Hall of the ILP NAC was also dismayed. Later in the year he helped to write the so-called 'Green Manifesto', Let us reform the Labour Party, which accused the Labour Party of neglecting the unemployed. For Hall and many other ILPers the final straw came in 1911 when the Party backed the National Insurance Bill with its contributory principle. They agreed with the SDF that this was a 'mean, petty and ridiculous'⁴⁵ proposal, that insurance would do nothing to solve the problem of unemployment and was simply a means of keeping workers at subsistence level until they were needed. The Insurance Bill was the catalyst which brought some 40 branches of the ILP, together with the Social-Democratic Federation, into the British Socialist Party.

The SDF's unemployment campaigns during the first decade of the twentieth century demonstrated its strengths but also highlighted its problems. Always at its best in an agitational

role the Federation pioneered a number of forms of campaigning which were later taken up by the Labour and Socialist movement, and particularly by the Communist Party, in the 1930s. The unemployed workers' hunger march from Northampton to London in 1905 was the first of its kind; the mass action against the Boards of Guardians and the Right to Work committees paved the way for later activists. In 1904 the SDF was the first organisation to call for a special session of Parliament, and its street campaigns were very successful in drawing public attention to the problem of unemployment, in forcing local authorities to provide both work and more generous relief, and in compelling the Government to act:-

it kept the matter so effectively in the news in 1904 that by the autumn Walter Long had summoned a London conference, largely to placate the rising uneasiness which it had done so much to generate. His decision to legislate also owed much to the SDF's activity.⁴⁶

These were surprising successes in view of the Federation's numerical and financial weaknesses, and they testify to the dedication of the small number of activists who continually mounted the campaigns, many suffering arrest and imprisonment. More importantly, they demonstrate that at a local level the SDF could be both a remarkably effective campaigner and an innovative body. Its conception of exploiting the 1905 Act to its fullest extent, and its realisation that local representatives

were far more susceptible to popular agitation than national governments marked the Federation as a formative influence on working-class opinion. Almost inevitably the SDF's leading role passed to other bodies - the TUC, the ILP and the LRC - once the spotlight shifted to Parliament. Once this had happened the lack of a consistent policy hampered the SDF's efforts. As it competed for a share of the national stage so its local activities were weakened; as it despaired of Parliament so it reverted to street politics. It wavered between the rhetoric of revolution, seeing the unemployed as shock troops to bring the establishment crashing down, and the politics of persuasion as it ridiculed any idea that the unemployed could cause a revolution.⁴⁷ In many senses the Federation relived its early years, oscillating between one extreme and the other, reacting to events rather than creating them. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in its attitude to the Labour Party. Throughout these years a debate raged within Social-Democratic ranks over re-affiliation to the Labour Party. Opponents of this pointed to the Labour Party's record on unemployment as convincing proof, if proof were needed, of the moral bankruptcy of the Party. Supporters of affiliation argued that the SDF's influence would be far more effective within the Labour Party, creating a strong left-wing presence and strengthening the position of critics like Leonard Hall. The party's position, its middle course, created innumerable difficulties for its branches. An examination of the debate is illustrative of these and provides

a further reason for the revival of Socialist unity and the eventual formation of the British Socialist Party.

NOTES.

1. Justice, 3 April 1909.
2. Pierson, British Socialists, p.91.
3. Hyndman, Further Reminiscences, (1912), p.253.
4. A. J. Kidd, 'The Social Democratic Federation and Popular Agitation Amongst the Unemployed in Edwardian Manchester', International Review of Social History, 1984, III, p.339.
5. Justice, 7 February 1903.
6. K. D. Brown, Labour and Unemployment 1900-1914, (1971), p.2.
7. Justice, 22 October 1904.
8. The Bradford branch of the SDF was reorganised in April 1904
9. Yorkshire Daily Observer, 17 and 22 October 1904.
10. Kidd, op.cit., p.345.
11. Ibid., p.347.
12. Both the Bradford and Manchester branches did so, and Skivington obtained an interview with Balfour when he visited Manchester in December 1904.
13. Justice, 14 January 1905.
14. Brown, op.cit., p.43.
15. Ibid., pp.44-45.
16. Kidd, op.cit., p.348.
17. Justice, 22 April 1905.
18. Ibid., 27 May and 3 June 1905.
19. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 31 July 1905, quoted in Kidd, op.cit., p.349.

20. Transport House, LRC Letter Files, 26, f287. J. R. MacDonald to W. S. Sanders, 25 September 1905, quoted in Brown, op.cit., p.65.
21. W. Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, (4th edition, 1978), p.6.
22. Forward, 2 February 1907.
23. Justice, 24 October 1908.
24. Ibid., 16 December 1905.
25. Ibid., 11 and 25 November 1905.
26. Gray, a Scot, was a solicitor, merchant and brewer, a disciple of Tolstoy who sacrificed both wealth and position on behalf of the unemployed. He was twice arrested in Trafalgar Square in October 1907 but twice rescued by the crowd.
27. Justice, 25 August 1906.
28. Yorkshire Daily Observer, 15 August 1906.
29. After the collapse of the Girlington camp Gray spent large sums of his own money on a further settlement at Eccleshill and later formed the Bradford Land Settlement Society at Esholt in co-operation with the Guild of Help.
30. Winston Churchill went to the Board of Trade, where he appointed Beveridge to plan a national system of labour exchanges. Masterman was appointed to the Local Government Board to counteract Burns.
31. Justice, 5 January 1907.
32. SDF, 28th Annual Conference Report, 1908.
33. Justice, 25 July 1908.

34. Ibid.
35. Pierson, British Socialists, p.255.
36. Yorkshire Post, 2 November 1908.
37. Kidd, op.cit., pp.354-55.
38. Justice, 10 October 1908.
39. Ibid., 31 October 1908.
40. Events criticised even by some SDF members.
41. Brown, op.cit., p.112.
42. Signed by Mrs. Webb, George Lansbury, Russell Wakefield and Chandler.
43. Justice, 25 June 1910.
44. Clarion, 21 January 1910.
45. Justice, 13 May 1911.
46. Brown, op.cit., p.165.
47. See Justice, 11 and 25 November 1905, 14 January 1905, for examples of the two extremes.

CHAPTER XIII.

'BENEVOLENT NEUTRALITY' - THE SDF AND THE LABOUR PARTY.

The Social-Democratic Federation had withdrawn from the Labour Representation Committee in 1901 partly to placate left-wing critics within its own ranks but also through a genuine desire to maintain its Socialist integrity. Its members objected to supporting men they hadn't selected and whose principles they opposed - men like Arthur Henderson whose victory at Barnard Castle in 1903 was viewed as a fraud perpetrated on the working-class electorate. Edward Hartley's comment on the Dewsbury by-election, that the Labour movement was solely concerned with intriguing men into parliament, whatever their political complexion, was one which commanded widespread support amongst SDFers and in the ranks of the Clarion movement. The early history of the LRC revived many of the SDF's traditional suspicions of the trade unions, and the balance of forces within the Federation shifted once more towards those who supported the traditional separation of the economic and political modes of action. Yet the SDF loudly proclaimed that withdrawal from the LRC should not be seen as a sign of hostility towards the trade unions. Rather than animosity 'friendly helpfulness' or 'benevolent neutrality' were to define their attitude. In truth the sticking point for the SDF, as one of its spokesmen later admitted, was the fact that they had not been allowed to run candidates, whether

at national or local level, under their own colours.¹

Nonetheless, the decision to stand aloof, arrived at after a hard-fought debate, did not signal a clarification of SDF policy. There was no conscious commitment to a revolutionary programme which would have clearly highlighted the demarcation lines between Labour and Socialist, a commitment such as that made by the 'impossibilists' of the Socialist Labour Party and the Socialist Party of Great Britain. The SDF attempted to steer a middle course and in so doing adopted a highly ambiguous position which confused both its own members and those outside its ranks. In May 1903 the Federation issued a manifesto on Labour Representation which insisted that mere independence from the twin parties of capitalism was of little use. It must be an informed and conscious independence which aimed at 'Socialist-Labour representation', urged the manifesto. What was needed was

a knowledge of the forces against you, and at the same time a consciousness of your own strength and power and of the responsibilities of your cause, such as you cannot possibly gain by whittling down your efforts to a colourless 'Labour' Party, independent in the House of Commons, perhaps, on technical trade matters and trade union questions, but unorganised and purposeless on those great national and international issues which affect the welfare of the whole of your class.²

The SDF's leaders repeatedly insisted that the Labour Party must have a programme and unless that programme was Socialist the Federation could not affiliate. The question which needed to be addressed, but one which the Social-Democrats never really came to grips with, was how that political consciousness was to be developed.

The precise relationship of the SDF and the Labour Party was subject to fluctuating opinion as the fortunes of the SDF ebbed and flowed, but it must be emphasised that there was a consistent majority against re-affiliation and that this was not simply explicable by Hyndman's influence. In fact Hyndman's position was decidedly ambiguous and he frequently wavered towards the pro-affiliation ranks. Speaking at the 1904 Conference he praised the Burnley comrades for their progress and argued in favour of their methods. Shortly afterwards he pondered that old methods and ideas, suitable when Socialists 'were a small set of fanatics with nothing but hostile crowds arounds us', were no longer relevant. 'We are compelled to act with those who do not wholly agree with us, in order to obtain results beneficial to the workers, whether we like such co-operation or not.'³ But the following year Hyndman declared that the LRC had changed for the worse and he would not consent to be bound by its constitution to support its non-Socialist leaders. In 1906 Hyndman confidently expected to be elected M.P. for Burnley and thereby to provide a Socialist leadership for the Labour Party. His defeat

temporarily deflated his spirits but nonetheless he remained optimistic about the prospects for the newly-renamed party and hoped it would soon use its augmented strength in the Commons to put into effect the SDF palliatives. In common with many Socialists Hyndman was soon disillusioned. 'Not a single Socialist speech has been delivered in the English Popular Assembly', he declared at the end of 1906.⁴ The inept performance of the Labour Party, coupled with SDF expansion at that time, encouraged hopes of Socialist advance outside the Labour Party and prompted the Federation to emulate its rival by changing its name to the Social-Democratic Party. Nevertheless, at the SDF's 1908 Conference Hyndman voted in favour of re-affiliation, ostensibly in response to the Labour Party's declaration in favour of Socialism at Hull that same year. The SDF should put this to the test, thought Hyndman. 'We ought to throw the onus of refusing to accept us as Socialists on the other people'.⁵ He had also been influenced by the resolution of the last two International Socialist Congresses, which accepted Labour Party affiliation to the International on the grounds that in practice it waged the class struggle even if it did not recognise it. As chairman of the British section of the International Hyndman felt obliged to be conciliatory at least.

Hyndman's uncertainty on the issue was echoed by many members. Fred Knee, for example, initially supported re-affiliation but changed his mind in 1907, heartily dis-

appointed that the position of Socialism had in no way been enhanced by the Labour Party's presence in the House of Commons; 'the marriage between the Trade Union movement and the emasculated Socialism has proved sterile,'⁶ he thought. Yet Knee too was encouraged by Labour's Hull resolution and voted in favour of rejoining the Labour Party in 1908. Broadly speaking there was a period of some twelve months after the 1906 election when opinion flowed in favour of re-affiliation and when the SDF appeared to accept the International's line. 'Whatever may be the shortcomings of the new party', declared Justice at the beginning of 1907, 'it certainly marks a political cleavage and is the beginning of a definite working class Parliamentary movement'.⁷ This tide was quickly turned as the Labour Party fumbled its way through the Parliamentary session and rumours of a Lib-Lab pact at the election abounded.⁸ Temporarily stemmed by the Hull resolution, opinion against affiliation hardened after 1908. Regular articles by Ben Tillet, vitriolic in their denunciation of the Labour Party, were featured in Justice. Whilst at times the pro-affiliation voice was raised loud and clear it could never command a majority on the matter. A ballot of the membership in 1907 produced a two-thirds majority against and even at the 1908 SDF Conference, where influential figures such as Hyndman, Knee, Gribble of Northampton, and Dan Irving voted in favour, the resolution was lost 130-30. Clearly then, Hyndman's was not the decisive voice on this issue.

The hardline opponent of affiliation and the dominant voice in the debate was Harry Quelch.

Quelch it was who had moved the Executive resolution proposing withdrawal from the LRC in 1901. Although he was motivated partly by a desire to maintain party unity at heart Quelch had always been suspicious of the trade unions, and the first twelve months of the LRC's existence reawakened all his old fears. Consequently he retreated to his instinctive separation of the economic and political arenas. The unions were to protect the economic interests of their members, individual SDFers must work within their unions and educate the workers to realise the necessity of a Socialist workers' party. Yet a formal political alliance between Socialists and Labour was out of the question, for it would compromise the independence of the Social-Democratic Federation. From this position Quelch never deviated; the LRC, he said, consisted of 'discordant elements, thrown together, in most cases, not by work for a common object, but by personal ambition.'⁹ He could not understand how men like Keir Hardie could, as he saw it, sink their principles to work alongside such as Crooks, Henderson and Shackleton. His sincerity was transparent; Socialists should not seek support under false pretences, he argued, and he for one did not wish to win an election standing under any banner other than that of Socialism. 'When the Labour Party accepts Socialism and is prepared to support Socialist candidates as such, our place will be inside.'¹⁰

The Labour Party was a compromise said Quelch and, more importantly, a compromise in which the Socialists lost heavily. With a humorous aphorism he suggested that 'When two men ride together on horseback one must ride behind',¹¹ a neat reference to the trade union paymasters of the Labour Party. Quelch's view of the Federation's role was quite simple. It was the advance guard, 'the head of the lance', and as such should lead the working class, not simply fall in with whichever way it was going. For Quelch and many other members, Victor Grayson's election for the Colne Valley in 1907 proved that it was possible to stand on an overtly Socialist platform and win elections. What was needed was a strong Socialist party and to that end he consistently advocated Socialist unity, a union with the ILP.

The Quelch viewpoint inevitably received a considerable airing in the pages of Justice but what is both remarkable and praiseworthy, as in the debate on trade unions, is the extent to which his opponents were given space to argue their case. Throughout this period the debate was given considerable prominence and it was conducted both at a very high theoretical level and on grounds of practicality. Both sides quoted Marx in their defence¹² and the lines of cleavage, as so often with the SDF, are very unclear. Tsuzuki has characterised the northern branches in particular as strong proponents of Socialist unity within a Labour alliance, whilst depicting the London leaders as favouring unity outside such a framework.¹³

Certainly the Lancashire strongholds of the Federation, Burnley, Blackburn and Rochdale particularly, were forcible advocates of affiliation but Edward Hartley in Bradford consistently argued against and some members of the Burnley branch broke away to join the SPGB. In London prominent figures like Herbert Burrows and J. B. Askew supported rejoining the Labour Party and, as we have seen, Hyndman and Fred Knee were uncertain. Neither was there a clear division between right and left in the party. Zelda Kahan and Theodore Rothstein, two prominent left-wing critics of Hyndman and both members of the Hackney branch, were divided over the issue. Kahan felt that the Labour Party was fundamentally different to the two capitalist parties. 'We have to capture rather than oppose it. It is the only material, however resistant at present, which we can hope to shape to our purpose, that of bringing about the Socialist Commonwealth.'¹⁴ Rothstein welcomed the turning of the trade unions to independent political action but felt that until they changed their political opinions Socialists should remain aloof.¹⁵ The situation in 1901, he said, had been 'Whether to share with a large Labour Party confusion and even worse things and to renounce clear-cut Socialist agitation among the masses, or rather to remain a small organisation but to work unhindered towards the Socialist enlightenment of the proletariat.'¹⁶ Yet he admitted that the SDF's position outside the Labour Party was anomalous and blamed it on the fact that in England

the working class organised itself into trade unions before the emergence of the Socialist movement. Recognising that anomaly Rothstein did not reject the Labour Party out of hand. If only the ILP, he thought, would renounce 'Labourism' and remember its Socialist principles then the two parties could form a bloc within the Labour Party which would be more than a match for the trade union leaders. John Maclean, the respected Glasgow revolutionary, conversely supported reaffiliation whilst being totally antagonistic to the ILP:

The ILP are loving brothers when they wish SDP members to aid in open-air summer propaganda. They work separately when the indoor season begins and when the selection of constituencies and candidates arrives, they carefully avoid taking the SDP into consideration until the candidate has been put in the field, and then again they become anxious for socialist unity to return their man....Those who dream of the accomplishment of a single socialist party by a kindly feeling being fostered between the leaders, etc, are Utopians ignorant of history, ignorant of men, and ignorant of the material forces that compel unity for any purpose.¹⁷

There was thus a wide diversity of opinion within the SDF which transcended any traditional geographical or political difficulties. The issue was further complicated by pressure from the Socialist International. In 1904 its Amsterdam

Congress had pointed out that there was 'but one proletariat in each country' and soon afterwards the French delegates to the International Bureau announced the formation of a united party in France. The stumbling block to a united Socialist party in Britain of course was the question of the Labour Party. An International Socialist Council for Great Britain was set up towards the end of 1905 but co-operation proved difficult and relations worsened when Glasier of the ILP placed a resolution on the agenda for the Stuttgart Congress in 1907 urging that any 'bona-fide trade unions' should be entitled to membership, whereas previously only those who recognised the 'class war' principle were admitted. To this the SDF was vehemently opposed, but at an ISB meeting in October 1908 a Kautsky resolution was adopted which admitted the Labour Party to membership on the grounds that 'although it does not directly recognise the proletarian class struggle, it nevertheless wages the struggle and in fact and by its very organisation, which is independent of bourgeois parties, is adopting the basis of the class struggle.'¹⁸ Hyndman was infuriated; he detected once again the Machiavellian hand of German Socialism seeking to dictate to the movement and he objected to Marx and Engels being trotted out as 'political popes' when, as he never tired of pointing out, they had both been wrong regarding the course of events in Britain.¹⁹ That strain of national pride exhibited by Hyndman on frequent occasions previously thus further confused the issue. None-

theless the Kautsky resolution in fact delineated the basic difference between the two factions within the SDF; there were those who saw the Labour Party as the organised political expression of the working class, which therefore had to be won for Socialism, and those who felt that it was simply a decoy duck for capitalism, the 'tail of the Liberal dog' as a Justice cartoon put it.²⁰ Their efforts would be put into building a new Socialist party.

The critics of disaffiliation had ample ammunition at hand to aid their campaign, for the 'middle course' espoused by Quelch placed the party in a ridiculous situation. Individual SDFers could be members of the Labour Party via their trade unions; branches of the SDF, said the 1903 Conference, should join their local Labour Representation Committees - 'It is excellent propaganda which cannot fail to bear fruit sooner or later'²¹ - a policy which was confirmed in 1909, but the national party should remain independent. The sheer illogicality of this position was mocked by J. H. Thornton of the Burnley branch:

Just fancy, that while the S.D.F. by being inside the L.R.C. as an organisation might suffer some terrible calamity, our comrades Quelch and Jones not only do not meet with any sort of disaster but come out of the debates with credit to themselves and to the organisation which is proud of

them and their ability to represent trade unionism as it should be represented and will be all the sooner, when the S.D.F. becomes affiliated...By our knowledge, energy, determination and enthusiasm, the Labour Representation Committee can be won by and for Socialism.²²

This was an argument which Quelch could hardly dispute for at both the 1905 and 1907 Labour Party Conferences he it was who moved the amendment opposing women's suffrage based on a property qualification, an amendment carried in defiance of the views of Keir Hardie who supported the limited suffrage bill. He was similarly effective on the London Trades Council. Other Social-Democrats were also able to intervene effectively at Labour Party Conferences, but their influence was inevitably circumscribed by the fact that they belonged to an organisation which refused to affiliate and were therefore easily branded as 'wreckers' or 'impossibilists'. The most glaring example of inconsistency was the case of Will Thorne.

Thorne had joined the Canning Town branch of the SDF in 1884, one of its early working-class members. A labourer in the Beckton gasworks, his Socialism led him into union organisation and Thorne was instrumental in founding the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers, the first of the New Unions. He felt that a general union would increase workers' solidarity and provide the necessary base to launch a new political party, representative of the workers'

interests and based on Socialism. Thorne was convinced that Socialism would be brought about peacefully, through Parliament, but in his early years at least was a firm believer in industrial action as a necessary adjunct to political organisation. The Gasworkers put up candidates in local elections as a matter of policy and Thorne himself was elected in West Ham in 1891. At West Ham he and other SDF/gasworker members were leading lights in the Labour group which won control of West Ham Council in 1898. His experiences convinced him of the need for a national independent and Socialist Labour Party and Thorne was one of the TUC representatives on the committee which drew up the agenda for the founding conference of the Labour Representation Committee. The Gasworkers, after the Railway Servants, were the second largest union to affiliate to the new party. With his SDF and union connections Thorne was a natural choice as parliamentary candidate for West Ham South in 1900. He stood as a Labour and Socialist candidate on a platform which owed much to SDF influence, but poor organisation and his anti-war stance cost him the seat. Inevitably the Federation's decision to leave the LRC caused him problems when he stood again in 1906. Thorne wanted to run, as before, as a 'Socialist and Labour' candidate. The local LRC, with a majority of SDF members, supported him in this but the national LRC refused to allow him to do so. Thorne therefore declared that he would stand down and only some determined lobbying of the local party and of Thorne himself by the Gasworkers Union persuaded him to stand as a Labour candidate.

Without this agreement of course Thorne might have had difficulties in winning the seat. MacDonald's secret pact with the Liberals in 1903 made the LRC ticket invaluable and gave Thorne a straight fight with the Conservative. But although he ran as an LRC candidate Thorne's election address was defiantly Socialist. A vote for Thorne was

a vote on behalf of the downtrodden and oppressed, a vote on behalf of the famished children in our schools, and of the disinherited in our pauper bastilles; it is a word of hope to the struggling masses in all parts of Great Britain, and of encouragement to all who suffer under the heel of capitalism, a blow struck for the workers in that war between Capitalism and Labour which must be waged relentlessly until the emancipation of the workers is achieved by the abolition of the Capitalist system.²³

With a majority of over 5,000, Thorne began a Parliamentary career that lasted until 1945. The SDF fully supported Thorne's actions, and Quelch attacked those who questioned the decision. It was ridiculous, he said, to suggest that, just because the SDF was not affiliated to the Labour Party, members who were officials of their unions should not be allowed to run as Labour Party candidates. 'If he were in the same position ...he would sign the Labour Party constitution'.²⁴ Such arguments confused many SDFers let alone those in the wider

movement. What was to Quelch 'benevolent neutrality' was, to John Moore of Rochdale, a 'jelly-fish' policy and to J. B. Askew a confession of moral bankruptcy. Moore questioned the logic of joining local LRCs and supporting non-Socialist candidates there whilst at national level opposing the LRC. Askew thought it absurd that Thorne could represent his union as an M.P. and that Quelch could attend Labour Party Conferences as a union delegate yet the SDF, 'a body which claims to be in the main a working-class organisation repudiates responsibility for the acts of a body to which the greater part of its members must of necessity belong.'²⁵ He accused Quelch of misinterpreting, and even ignoring, the class war. The Labour Party, suggested Askew, was, on Marx's definition, a working-class organisation. What possible reason could the SDF have for not identifying with a body which stood for the political independence of Labour? 'The more we stand outside of the Labour Party...the more do we play into the hands of those very elements whose influences we deplore.' Socialism, said Askew, should be identified not simply with a far-off ideal but with daily struggles; the SDF placed far too much emphasis on the 'abstract presentation of Socialism...a definite system...to be accepted as a whole and too little of Socialism as the necessary result of the efforts of the proletarian to free himself.'²⁶ Thorne agreed whole heartedly and it is noticeable that whereas his manifesto was a clear-cut and unashamed exposition of Socialist principles, boldly emphasising

the doctrine of the 'class war', Hyndman in Burnley stood rather as a moderate 'and his election address contained nothing that would suggest revolutionary Socialism.'²⁷ Quelch had been similarly ambivalent at Dewsbury in 1902, and at Southampton in 1906 had actively canvassed an agreement with the Liberals in that two-member constituency. Muddled thinking seemed endemic in the Social-Democratic Federation, over both the Labour Party and political policy generally, with the members torn between a desire for electoral success and revolutionary purity. Thornton, the Burnley activist, expressed the problem very clearly. The SDF's attitude, he said, was one of 'maudlin vacillation' and downright timidity. Either the Labour Party was 'tending' towards the emancipation of the workers or it was not. If it was then the SDF should be inside assisting it to its ultimate goal; if it was not then it should be vigorously opposed. Either course would be preferable to the nauseating policy of 'sentimental sympathy'. Make up your mind, urged Thornton, either the Federation is purely a party of revolutionary propaganda or it seeks to palliate the system too, in which case it is stupid to stand 'shivering, afraid to take the plunge, fearing the S.D.F. may be drowned.'²⁸ Most importantly, thought Thornton, 'This dog-in-the-manger policy of the organisation is nullifying what is done locally...keeping back the growth and usefulness of the S.D.F. and adding to the growth and influence of the I.L.P. as a consequence.'²⁹

Was this an accurate picture of developments in Lancashire?

The Socialist movement in Lancashire was stagnant after 1895, a reflection of the national scene. With the exception of Blackburn, an alliance with the trade unions seemed some way off and appeals for Socialist unity, from both SDF and ILP branches, were in a sense appeals for survival. The formation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 altered this perspective and placed the movement in Lancashire at a cross-roads. SDF branches in the county had persistently advocated an alliance with the unions and were therefore seemingly well-placed to take advantage of national developments. They were, consequently, aghast at the SDF's decision to withdraw from the LRC and the Lancashire branches, particularly Blackburn, Burnley and Rochdale, consistently urged reaffiliation. Initially they did not seem particularly affected by the decision, but they were divided over tactics. The Blackburn SDF supported Quelch on Socialist unity, yet its three branches participated in the Labour alliance; Accrington wanted to 'permeate and capture the trade unions', whilst Dan Irving, chairman of the SDF's 1901 Conference, merely advocated more Socialist representatives 'to waken up people'. Seemingly the Lancashire branches did not regard the secession from the LRC as decisive; the LRC was, as yet, in its infancy and not strong in the county and the next election was some way off. As the Federation allowed participation in local committees

there was a feeling that the branches could continue to operate much as before.

An early warning was sounded in Manchester, where the two SDF branches joined the local LRC on its formation in 1903. The SDF attempt to move a Socialist resolution as the basis for the new organisation was ruled out by a combination of trade union and ILP opposition, and when the SDF would not make a definite promise to contribute to the Committee's expenses it was excluded altogether. Manchester was in many ways an atypical SDF branch, and it had lost much of its influence to the ILP after W. K. Hall's candidature at South Salford in 1891. Nonetheless union hostility and ILP moderation in Manchester reflected national developments and demonstrated the dangerous isolation of the SDF after 1901. Thereafter the Manchester SDFers reverted to their traditional campaigning and propagandist role, with the issue of unemployment as their focus, and achieved some success. There were ten SDF branches in the area by 1908, although this does not imply a corresponding increase in membership, and this paralleled a revival of SDF fortunes generally.

From a position of near extinction in Lancashire in 1903 the Social-Democratic Federation could boast over 40 branches by 1906. In 1903 Irving had loudly complained that the Lancashire branches 'need a lesson on the elements of organisation' and urged members to 'think less of their

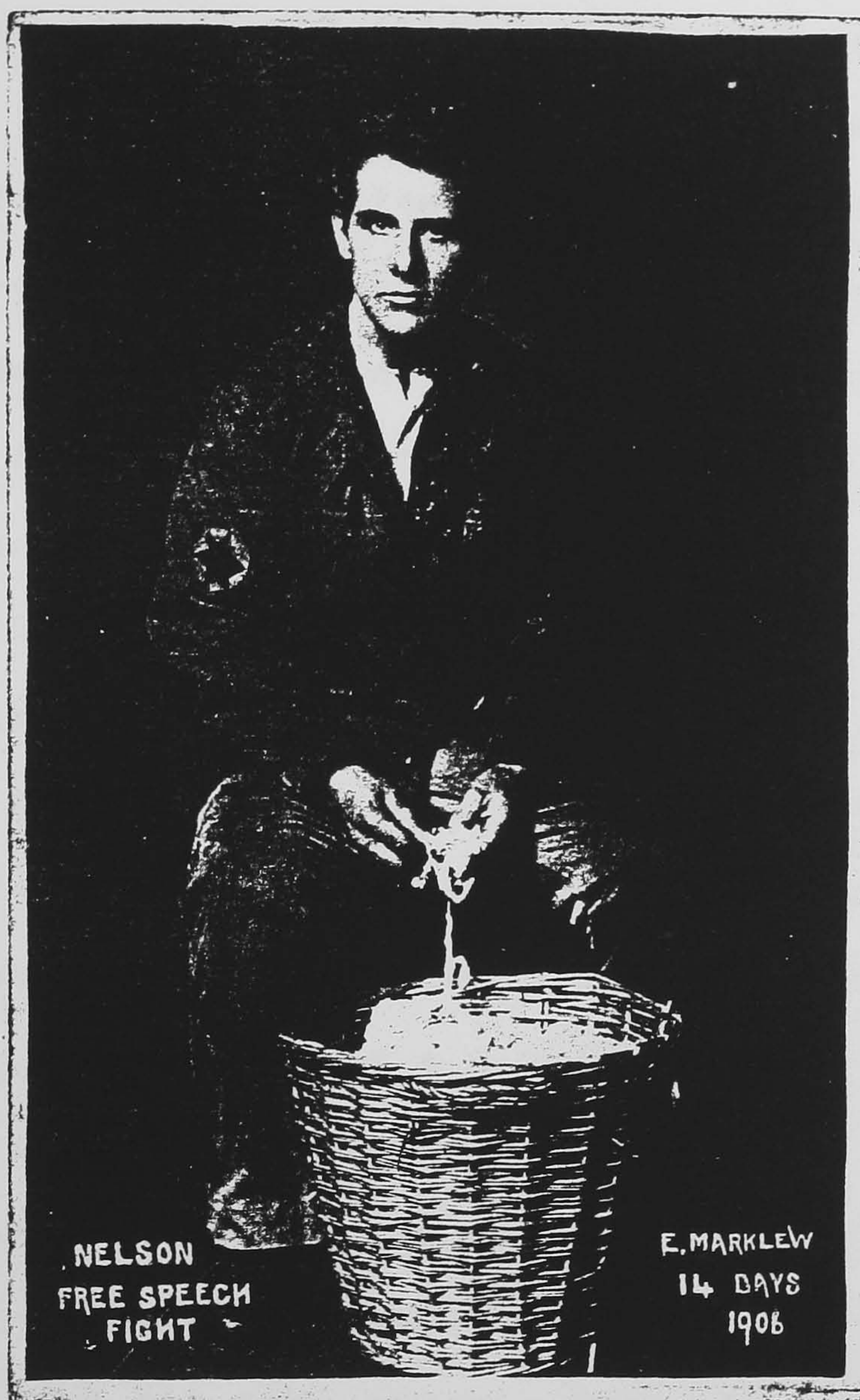
individual likes and dislikes, and place themselves under the necessary discipline...without which they are so weak as to merit the contempt of the enemy, the capitalist class.'³⁰ Hyndman had voiced similar complaints,³¹ and although the Federation claimed 23 branches in 1902 many of these, outside Burnley, existed largely through the efforts of one or two members.³² At a Lancashire Federation meeting in May 1902 only six branches were represented and the Federation was consequently disbanded. What then caused the resurrection of the party between 1903 and 1906?

In part the SDF benefited, along with all radical groups, from a rising anti-Tory sentiment amongst the working class during the closing years of the Balfour Government, motivated by the issues of tariff reform, Taff Vale, and the indentured labour of Chinese workers in South Africa. The Federation was able to present sharply distinctive policies, in contrast to the LRC which appeared simply to be trailing to the Liberal Party. For example it attacked both Free Trade and Protection, declaring that 'we oppose the capitalist Free Traders no less than their Protectionist opponents. They profess to look after your interests by securing for you cheap food, whereas they are really concerned only with the cheapness of the supply of labour'.³³ The return of the trade depression, with Lancashire losing export markets, meant the return of unemployment and the SDF was able to revive its unemployed campaigns.

Many Socialists were hugely disappointed with the performance of the Labour Party over the issue and could expect few radical solutions from the Liberals. With the ILP firmly tied to the Lib-Lab axis at this time the SDF offered the only alternative, and the issue of unemployment was one reason for ILP defections to the British Socialist Party in 1911. A final factor was the improved organisation instituted by Dan Irving, who became District Secretary. Irving's influence, as Selina Cooper had remarked,³⁴ was not entirely beneficial, 'yet his indefatigable organisation and his links with the unions provided a base that presented the Liberals with a serious challenge'³⁵ in Burnley. He was aided by financial support from the Countess of Warwick, a flamboyant if unlikely recruit to the SDF, who thought that Hyndman was destined to be the first Socialist Prime Minister and was prepared to back his campaign to that end. The arrival in Lancashire of William Gee, 'The Socialist Dreadnought' and ex-Scottish organiser, also provided an impetus for the SDF. Thus, by 1906 'the S.D.F. was once more a lively left-wing party with plenty of room in which to operate.'³⁶

The vital question, of course, was how would the SDF operate. This apparent growth of the SDF was not reflected in election results in the county, and for an organisation which placed great emphasis on municipal electioneering as a means of obtaining palliatives this was a significant factor. The abolition of the School Boards in 1903 closed one avenue of

SDF influence, but the key was their exclusion from the Labour Representation Committee. Thus, in 1905, they put up 19 candidates of whom only seven were successful, and four of these were in Blackburn and Accrington where the SDF formed part of a Labour alliance. The Nelson branch had recognised the problem at an early stage, and argued that withdrawal from the LRC would shut off the Federation from local developments to the detriment of its own progress.³⁷ Events in the town justified their foreboding. Social-Democrats in Nelson hoped to field their own candidate at the 1902 Clitheroe by-election, but the ILP wanted Philip Snowden. A personal quarrel between Snowden and a leading SDFer made agreement unlikely and indeed led to a 'decided rupture between the ranks of the I.L.P. and S.D.F.' in Nelson.³⁸ In the event both groups were pre-empted by the newly-formed Labour Representation Association which nominated David Shackleton, the secretary of the Cotton Weavers. Snowden acquiesced in this decision, thereby earning kudos for the ILP, but the SDF were dismayed. So strong was the union in the constituency that the Liberals and Conservatives declined to challenge Shackleton and he was returned unopposed. A Labour Representation Committee was formed a few weeks after his success and as a result the Textile Workers voted to join the national LRC early in 1903. The Labour Party in Nelson became a very efficient organisation indeed, with the trade unions providing the numbers, the ILP the ideology and leading activists, and the Nelson Workers' Guide the mouthpiece. Between 1903 and 1906 the Nelson ILP



NELSON
FREE SPEECH
FIGHT

E. MARKLEW
14 DAYS
1906

Ernest Marklew of the Burnley SDF,
imprisoned for his part in the
Nelson free speech fight, 1906.

doubled its membership and 6 ILP members were elected councillors. At the 1906 General Election Shackleton had a majority of 8,000, and a few months later Nelson became the first Labour-controlled Town Council in Lancashire. As these events unfolded the SDF branch was increasingly left out on a limb. Its initial reaction was that 'Socialists should stand as Socialists and the only alliance they should seek is that of all other Socialists'.³⁹ They even floated a Nelson and District Socialist Workers' Union in opposition to the official textile body. Consequently influential members like Selina Cooper joined the ILP, although she and others did retain nominal membership of the SDF as a recognition of its role in the formation of a Labour movement in the town. This pointed a signpost to the future, the SDF as the conscience of the movement rather than an integral part of it. In Nelson, as the Social-Democratic Federation hesitated over whether to join the LRC, the ILP took advantage of this to overtake and eventually replace its rival. The Federation finally decided to affiliate to the LRC in June 1906,⁴⁰ but the marriage lasted barely a year.

Many of the trade unions were suspicious of the SDF's motives and the local Liberal press was not slow to whip up feeling against the Federation. The Nelson SDF, said the Nelson Leader, had been 'in danger of losing their political existence' and that was their sole reason for allying themselves with the LRC, which they had unsparingly criticised in the past.⁴

Throughout 1906 and into the early months of 1907 the Socialists were engaged in a 'free speech' fight with the authorities, which led to 'some of the most riotous scenes ever seen in Nelson.'⁴² Bryan Chapman, the SDF secretary, and Ernest Marklew of Burnley were arrested and later imprisoned for refusing to pay their fines. The SDF clearly felt that the new Labour-controlled council should intervene with the police authorities to prevent further prosecutions, and it accused the Labour group of reneging on a promise to support them in their campaign for a central open-air meeting place in Nelson. An acrimonious exchange of letters appeared in the local press, with an angry Labour councillor urging the SDF to stop its 'mud-throwing'. The Labour view was that the SDF was seeking 'Free advertisement and notoriety on the cheap',⁴³ the SDF castigated the Labour councillors as a 'disgrace to our democratic organisations' and said that the previous Liberal administration had been far more even-handed in its treatment of public meetings.⁴⁴ Eventually the breach between the two organisations came over the question of municipalisation.

In February 1907 the Nelson SDF pushed through the annual meeting of the LRC a resolution urging the Town Council to ballot ratepayers on the question of municipalising the drink trade. When this resolution appeared before the council though only two Labour councillors backed it. The SDF

publically condemned the councillors and urged the LRC to make all resolutions binding on its members holding public office. This caused a furore, with union members of the LRC protesting loudly at a 'mere handful of Socialists' attempting to dictate the policy of the 'great Labour cause'.⁴⁵ The LRC snubbed the SDF, refusing to accept Chapman's nomination for the Guardian elections, when two Labour Guardians were retiring. They stood only one candidate and the SDF, furious, ran Chapman on their own behalf. He came bottom of the poll with 661 votes, well behind the LRC candidate in fourth place, who was elected with 1296 votes. A special meeting of the Nelson LRC was called for 28 May 1907 and, as the Nelson Leader commented, 'It is a crisis in the history of the Nelson Labour Movement'.⁴⁶ At that meeting, far more heavily attended than usual, the LRC overwhelmingly refused to condemn the Labour councillors and asked the SDF to withdraw its affiliation. The role of the ILP in these events was ambivalent. A number of ILPers had supported the SDF in their campaign for 'free speech' and clearly many were disappointed at the council's inactivity over municipalisation. One member wrote to complain that 'the Labour Party has been in power in Nelson for fifteen months and the only thing that stands to its "credit" is the prosecution of the Socialists',⁴⁷ and another attacked the Labour mayor, Councillor Rickard, as 'a disgrace to the organisation to which he belongs'.⁴⁸ But as an organisation the ILP supported the LRC, and criticism from ILPers was tolerated by the LRC. They had been members of the Committee

from the outset and had established an accepted left-wing position within. The SDF's late affiliation though was seen simply as a belated attempt to ensure their own survival and to control the organisation. Many LRC members pointed out that the SDF had initially got their resolutions through by narrow majorities at sparsely attended meetings, and the packed hall for the special meeting was the result of assiduous whipping of union members.

The SDF's response to these events was unambiguous. Chapman said that 'if they could not permeate the L.R.C. within, they would fight them from without.'⁴⁹ Temporary additions to their ranks as a result of the blaze of publicity encouraged them to oppose Labour candidates in three wards in the 1907 municipal elections. Results were disappointing and the following year only one SDF candidate was advanced.⁵⁰ Thereafter the SDF in Nelson became an increasingly ineffective voice, a propagandist body adrift from the only mass constituency it could hope to canvass.

Events in Nelson were reflected elsewhere. The SDF found it increasingly difficult to influence trade unions once the LRC became established. After 1901 individual SDFers such as Quelch, Atkinson of the Paper Stainers, and Hacking of Rochdale Trades Council continued to attend LRC conferences as union delegates and, as Jeffrey Hill rightly suggests of Atkinson, 'the SDF suffered greatly through not having more of his kind to exert their influence'.⁵¹ But after 1903 there was no SDF

spokesman in any of the Lancashire unions affiliated to the LRC. The SDF's electoral success in Blackburn in 1900,⁵² and Philip Snowden's promising parliamentary campaign as a 'Labour and Socialist' candidate, demonstrated the gains to be made by co-operation with the ILP and the unions. Although never a smooth and unhindered relationship with the unions the SDF had made headway, and the two Socialist groups recognised the strength of Conservative values in the town and were prepared to fight together. Thus by 1900 the Socialists had created a Labour alliance in which they had a dominant voice. In general SDF/ILP relations remained close until 1906, and they again co-operated in Snowden's election campaign. Snowden at this time was dubious of any agreement with the Liberals, particularly in a Tory stronghold like Blackburn, and he urged the electors to 'plump' for him rather than vote Liberal and Labour in tandem in this two member constituency. He achieved a brilliant victory, and Blackburn became the only constituency in the country to elect a Tory and a Socialist in double harness.⁵³

The year 1906 was to be the apogee of SDF fortunes in Blackburn. On this occasion Snowden had followed LRC instruction and stood as a 'Labour' candidate only. Along with the other ILP leaders he was now prepared to subsume his Socialism in the attempt to gain parliamentary representation. The Blackburn ILP acquiesced in this decision and thereafter their efforts were concentrated on the Labour alliance rather

than Socialist unity, whereas previously both strategies had been considered as part of a whole. There was also, again in line with national trends, a move to rapprochement with the Liberals. Snowden, in the two elections of 1910, fought in alliance with the Liberals. He could not afford to call for 'plumpers' when the two parties agreed on the Budget and when Labour desperately needed a reversal of the Osborne judgement. This was anathema to the SDF, who reluctantly supported Snowden in January 1910 but refused to do so in December. They had built their base upon the Tory working men of Blackburn and, as Tom Hurley said of the Liberals, the SDF did not 'want their vote, never did want their vote and never will want their vote'.⁵⁴ Yet this base was being eroded. One ex-Conservative trade unionist remarked that 'I am a Conservative but I put my trade unionism first. This new Labour Party are the best friends trade unions ever had.'⁵⁵ The Trades Council became increasingly involved in Labour politics and therefore increasingly co-operative with the ILP, which concentrated on the palliatives which had once been the hallmark of SDF campaigning in the town. The SDF adopted a more aggressive stance which alienated many erstwhile supporters on the Trades Council. In 1908 and 1909 the SDF was wiped out electorally in Blackburn and, apart from a brief revival connected with its unemployed demonstrations, was largely a spent force by 1910. As in Nelson the ILP was the chief beneficiary of the development, both nationally and

locally, of the Labour Representation movement. By 1909 it had 900 members and a full time secretary in Blackburn. Yet, in both towns, the SDF had played a substantial role in the development of the Labour movement in the political arena. Unarguably the decision to withdraw from the Labour Representation Committee had negated its influence.

The Rochdale branch of the SDF had developed a somewhat different outlook to that of its counterpart in Blackburn. Throughout the 1890s it had striven to make inroads into the Trades Council and the trade unions, but in this it had been largely frustrated. Nonetheless, basing its approach on uncompromising anti-Liberalism, the SDF had become the dominant partner in a Socialist alliance with the ILP. This practical demonstration of Socialist unity achieved some electoral success⁵⁶ but it did not mean an abandonment of the search for an alliance with the unions. What it did mean was that the ultimate Socialist vision was always more to the fore in Rochdale than say Blackburn or Nelson, and SDFers in Rochdale aimed at the creation of a Socialist Labour Party. In this they were supported by the ILP branch and the two agreed in 1902 to stand S. G. Hobson as a 'Labour and Socialist' candidate at the next parliamentary election. This candidature was not approved by the ILP nationally nor by the LRC. Keir Hardie asked Hobson to withdraw, and, according to Hobson, Glasier accused him of being 'a source of embarrassment', the reason being, said John Penny the ILP secretary, that 'we want Rochdale to bargain with for somewhere else'.⁵⁷ A bargain

with the Liberals was out of the question for the Rochdale SDF, who were vehemently opposed to any 'Progressive' alliance, and Hobson declared his intention of standing 'as an avowed Socialist free from any galling or uncompromising restrictions.'

⁵⁸ In so doing neither he nor the SDF/ILP axis were adopting a separatist stance, although they clearly rejected Lib-Labism. Both Hobson and the Rochdale SDF were fierce critics of the SDF's decision to withdraw from the LRC. This, said Hobson, was 'a political blunder worse than a crime...had they continued inside there is little doubt that they would have shamed the I.L.P. into some kind of Socialist consistency.'⁵⁹ John Moore, the Rochdale delegate to the SDF's Annual Conferences, frequently urged re-affiliation. Thus, at the 1905 Conference in Northampton, he argued that

they in Lancashire had come to the conclusion that the L.R.C. was a living political force; it was obtaining an influence among the working classes in the great industrial centres.... Breaking away from Liberal and Tory associations meant a very great step in advance - a revolution in ideas: and if we refused to take part in the movement which resulted from our work, then we were going to be left behind.⁶⁰

Their aim was to create, via Socialist unity, a left-wing presence in the Labour Representation Committee. In July

1905 their pressure locally paid off when the Trades Council voted by 20 votes to 17 to assist in the formation of an LRC 'on the national basis'. This was an uproarious meeting, followed by the withdrawal from the Trades Council of the Liberal-dominated Spinners, Piecers and Power Loom overlookers. Secessions aside this was a significant victory for Socialist propaganda, and John Moore of the SDF and James Firth of the ILP became chairman and secretary respectively of the new LRC. In Rochdale the development of the Labour Representation Movement was not simply a consequence of anti-Liberalism but the result of a decade of Socialist propaganda. Thomas Clegg, Hobson's campaign organiser, was the ex-Liberal agent. He declared himself won over to the Socialists 'by their self-denial, honesty of purpose and work', which inspired him to work harder and better for the workers cause.⁶¹ As one observer commented, 'those who had joined the party in Rochdale had done so not so much from disgust with the two orthodox parties, but because they believed that the Labour principles were those which would raise people to a better state of existence than ever before.'⁶² There was to be no national type LRC-Liberal understanding here.

Hobson made no concessions to moderate Labour opinion in his campaign. His was a full-blooded Socialist propaganda effort which led the local press to label him an unrepresentative extremist and Charles Redfern of the Spinners union to appear on the Liberal platform 'in the absence of a Labour

candidate'. Yet Hobson polled impressively. Attacked by the press and the Catholic church, lacking official ILP and LRC support, he gained 19.5 per cent of the vote as opposed to Clark's eight per cent in 1900. Although the Liberals regained the seat their percentage of the vote was the same as in 1900, yet Lancashire as a whole had seen a massive swing to the Liberals. The Socialist alternative to Liberalism was gaining strength, attracting recruits from both the major parties, and the Rochdale Citizen felt that 'if we progress at the same rate during the next few years, victory is assured to us.'⁶³ The period 1890-1906 had been a vital one for the Labour movement in Rochdale, during which it had weakened the Liberal hold on the town. In this process the SDF had played a vital role as an educating force, its vitality demonstrated by its pre-eminence over the ILP. Hobson thought they would have done better still but for the lack of official backing. 'If at Rochdale we failed to light a fire', he said, 'there were sparks and dry embers. Socialist unity had been killed by the careerists', although 'a not inconsiderable I.L.P. remnant bestirred itself.'⁶⁴ Written some 30 years after the election these reflections were in fact an accurate record of events after 1906.

National trends affected the SDF in Rochdale just as they did in Blackburn and Nelson. The immediate effect of the disaffiliation decision of 1901 was minimal but as the LRC became stronger and more established so the ramifications of

that decision became clearer. In all three towns the SDF had been instrumental in the formation of the LRC; the national policy of the party caused hesitation and heart-searching locally, and whilst the SDF dithered the ILP was able to take advantage. This was certainly true in Rochdale too, where ILP membership grew rapidly after the convening of the LRC in 1905, at the expense of the SDF. John Moore was aghast at the party's continued refusal to reaffiliate. They had done all the hard work in Rochdale, he raged, had contested three elections but now, in 1908, the ILP branch had decided to fall in line with its party's national policy. The SDF in Rochdale could now either fight on its own, or 'consent to be snuffed out'.⁶⁵ Federation hostility to the LRC was ridiculous, said Moore; 'we are lost in nebulosity so far as political affairs are concerned.'⁶⁶ Marxists should form an integral part of the working-class army, showing the way and thus countering the influence of MacDonald and his ilk. The only other logical way, he argued, was 'impossibilism' and at least that would be honest and consistent. As it was the SDF in Blackburn, in Clitheroe, and in Rochdale 'are politically dead in consequence of our absurd position'.⁶⁷ Quelch would have none of that. If the SDF was politically dead in Rochdale, he thought, 'affiliation with the Labour Party would mean our burial'.⁶⁸ Some Rochdale members obviously thought otherwise. and realised that the SDF on its own would not cut an attractive figure at the polls. J. Sutcliffe argued against standing a

Socialist candidate in 1910. 'He travelled to Manchester every morning with nine other Socialists, all of whom voted for the Socialist candidate at the last election. This time every one of them would vote for the Liberal candidate',⁶⁹ Dan Irving stood in Rochdale in January 1910 supported by local funds only. He polled 1,755 votes, as against Hobson's 2,506 in 1906. In December, again as a purely local candidate, he polled slightly better. There was obviously a consistent hard-core of Socialist support in Rochdale but the reform of the Lords, the National Insurance Bill, the Osborne judgement were all matters which touched the everyday life of working men and the SDF, outside the Labour Party, could offer a vision of the future but nothing in the here and now. Thus the ILP reaped the harvest which the SDF had helped sow. Its fading appeal was clearly demonstrated in 1911 when the LRC announced that Ben Turner of Batley would contest the seat at the next election. The Dewsbury Reporter suggested that 'The Labour and Socialist parties at Rochdale for some time have had their differences' and gleefully reported that the SDF intended to run a rival candidate.⁷⁰ However, at Turner's adoption meeting John Moore failed to get a hearing, and Turner was accepted by a huge majority. George Barnes, speaking for Turner, said that many in the Labour Party were Socialist 'but they preferred to get what they could out of legislation to being Socialists mouthing shibboleths by the fireside.'⁷¹ The workers of Rochdale should be represented by a man of their own class.

After 1906 three strongholds of the Lancashire SDF had been usurped by the ILP as the leading Socialist organisation, due largely to the Federation's breach with the LRC. But what of Burnley, the premier SDF branch in the country, where the ILP barely existed? The Social-Democrats in Britain pinned their hopes on Burnley as the point of departure for a Socialist Labour Party independent of the LRC. They were convinced that Hyndman's election would be the signal for a Socialist breakthrough on all fronts, an attitude which led Askew to protest at the 'deification' of Hyndman. 'The S.D.P.', he said, 'will become nothing more nor less than an organisation to secure Hyndman's return to parliament.'⁷² That aside Burnley provides a glaring example of SDF inconsistency. Here was a very strong branch, firmly in favour of a Labour alliance, but at parliamentary level they could not co-operate with the LRC. In 1904 the Trades Council and SDF mounted a joint effort in the elections for the Board of Guardians. The SDF in fact lost its three seats but for Dan Irving that was not important:

To me, desirous of building up a Socialist-Labour Party in the town embracing all organised workers, the fact that we have stood in battle array, together, even to lose a fight, is but the precursor of a victorious campaign for Socialism and Labour.⁷³

Irving and the SDF followed this up by arguing for a Labour

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H. M. Hyndman.



H. M. HYNDMAN.

"I have advocated vigorously for a quarter of a century the Nationalisation and Socialisation of our great means and instruments of creating and distributing wealth, under the direct control and in the interests of the whole people. The railways, the mines, the public departments, the trusts, pools, and combines, which have obtained mastery in this country under Free Trade, as elsewhere under Protection, are ripe for this wholesome transformation."

Election Address, 1906.

Henry Mayers Hyndman, SDF
Parliamentary candidate for
Burnley 1895, 1906 and 1910.

Representation Committee, which was finally inaugurated in June 1905. This was a major success for a number of unions, and particularly the weavers, had always been suspicious of the SDF. The Liberal press, however, was quick to take advantage of the dichotomy between the Federation locally and nationally, arguing that the LRC was nothing more than a Social-Democratic front aimed at getting trade union money. They also seized on the fact that Socialist candidates in the elections stood as such whereas Liberals and Tories in the LRC could not parade their colours. Many Radicals in the weavers' union were prepared to listen to these attacks and to criticisms of Hyndman's secularism. The weavers withdrew from the LRC in 1906, depriving it of its chief financial contributor, and the SDF, which boasted two councillors in every other year between 1906 and 1914, could only get Irving elected that year. What effect did this uneasy relationship have on Hyndman's parliamentary campaign?

The Burnley Liberals, with a strong tradition of working-class support, had no intention of agreeing to any electoral pact with the SDF. In 1903, much to the SDF's rage, they put up Fred Maddison, a 'Lib-Lab' compositor and journalist, and notorious anti-Socialist. His opposition to the Eight-Hour Day, and his attacks on the railway strike whilst editor of The Railway Review, earned considerable union hostility and both the Trades Council and miners passed resolutions in favour of Hyndman. Significantly though the Burnley Labour

Representation Committee adopted a rather curious position; whilst passing a pro-Hyndman resolution it did not commit its affiliated bodies to that decision and both the weavers and the overlookers declared themselves neutral. Hyndman's campaign was moderate; he emphasised Home Rule for Ireland, parliamentary reform and the SDF palliatives; he made great play of his knowledge of foreign affairs. Opposed by a Tory free trader and a Lib-Lab, Hyndman guardedly supported Free Trade but the working-class vote was inevitably split. Michael Davitt's appeal to the Irish vote failed to win over the Irish League, which urged its members to vote Liberal. On a 95 per cent poll Hyndman came third, only 33 votes behind the Tory and less than 400 behind Maddison.⁷⁴ The result demonstrated the significant support for the SDF in Burnley, but its failure to win key unions and the anomaly of its position in the Labour Representation Committee meant that by a very narrow margin it had been prevented from achieving its first electoral success. The eight other candidates of the Social-Democratic Federation⁷⁵ were also defeated but, with the exception of the somewhat unlikely contest at Camborne in Cornwall, all polled creditably. Only Thorne in West Ham and Irving in Accrington had straight fights with the Conservatives, and the Federation's results were no worse than those of Labour candidates in three-cornered struggles.⁷⁶ Irving's result in Accrington though demonstrated the advantages of a Labour alliance. In spite of the fact that he was Hyndman's agent at Burnley, and therefore handicapped by his absence

from the constituency, he polled nearly 5,000 votes and established a firm base for future Labour contests.

The narrowness of Hyndman's defeat provoked mixed reactions in the SDF. They felt that success next time was assured and Hyndman himself was revitalised, announcing his readiness to rejoin the Executive of the Federation if nominated.⁷⁷ Locally the SDF continued to run as LRC members and concentrated their attacks on Maddison, particularly his opinion that the level of unemployment was exaggerated. In common with many other branches they organised demonstrations, formed an Unemployed Workmen's Association, and fought for the 'Right to Work'. A few members, antagonistic to the idea of co-operation with the unions after the weavers' departure from the LRC, formed a short-lived branch of the SPGB but that was an isolated protest against the Burnley SDF's policy. It remained a seemingly vital force in Burnley politics, but even here the warning signs were apparent. The Labour Representation Committee collapsed in 1909, the unions increasingly suspicious of the SDF as nationally it trumpeted its opposition to the Labour Party. Irving unavailingly warned the Federation of the consequences of its position. Criticism from outside was bound to lose its effect, he argued, and ensure that the SDF was viewed unsympathetically. The SDF had achieved its favourable position in Burnley, Northampton and elsewhere precisely because it had abandoned its isolation. To co-operate with the Labour Party at international gatherings and to accept them as members of the ISB, whilst remaining

apart from them at home was both ludicrous and dangerous. However, the supporters of reaffiliation to the Labour Party were heavily outnumbered in the years after Victor Grayson's election to Parliament. As the Labour Party faltered and fumbled so a Socialist revival prospered, inspired as much by Blatchford's Clarion as by the SDF or ILP. Socialist unity once more became a live issue, with Socialists in Bolton, Manchester, Essex, and diverse parts of the country forming united bodies. The SDF fought three by-elections in 1908, in constituencies which the Labour Party refused to contest: Manchester North-West, Haggerston and Newcastle-on-Tyne. The latter was a two-member constituency where the Labour Party already held one seat, and the Party's attitude towards two-member constituencies was heavily criticised both by the SDF and sections of the ILP. At the 1910 General Election therefore, in the light of this Socialist enthusiasm, Hyndman's chances were again viewed optimistically.

The General Election of January 1910 was fought on the issue of Lloyd George's radical Budget and its rejection by the Lords. The SDF's election manifesto attacked both the Lords and the Budget, and it declared the election to be 'a sham fight' between two factions both intent on plundering the people. An article in Justice listed the 'crimes' of Liberalism from the days of Chartism onwards and there were calls for Socialists to abstain or even vote Tory in order to defeat 'the historic party of the capitalist class.'⁷⁸ In

Burnley, Hyndman again received the support of the Trades Council and the Miners' Executive, for Maddison had once more antagonised much Labour opinion by his rejection of the Right To Work Bill. Yet Hyndman and the six other official SDF candidates⁷⁹ all came bottom of the poll. Although Hyndman's vote held up well all the others registered a sharply reduced vote. Their refusal to take a clear stand on the major issue of the election had cost them dear. Hyndman's candidature had caused the Liberals to lose the seat, letting in the Tories for only the second time since 1868.⁸⁰ The situation in Parliament was now radically altered. Forty Labour M.Ps had been returned, each of them without Liberal opposition. They now held a pivotal position, for the Liberal majority had been wiped out. Yet essentially their freedom of action was even more circumscribed; any move to bring down the Government would clearly antagonise many voters and with the Osborne judgement hanging over the Party's head like the Sword of Damocles their inclination to do so was somewhat limited. This confirmed the SDF's hostile attitude to the Labour Party; the adhesion of the miners, said Quelch, had cemented the Lib-Lab alliance and the Labour Party now was no different to the old Lib-Lab group which had existed prior to the formation of the LRC.

The SDF's lack of grasp on political reality was never more sharply emphasised than in the months between the two

elections of 1910. It renewed its calls for an anti-Liberal vote as a means of pressuring the Liberal Party into granting Hyndman a straight fight at Burnley and the SDF a free run in seats elsewhere. The Liberal Party had to be smashed to clear the way for Socialism said John Maclean, who argued that the Liberals in Pollokshaws had lost the seat because of SDF opposition. It was as if the SDF was hypnotised by its past, unable to adapt to circumstances; the manifesto offered no guidance to voters on the great issue of the moment. Victor Fisher thought it 'a policy of sterile Little Bethelism'. As the constitutional problem rumbled on the SDF called for a National Convention to press for political reform whilst Hyndman advocated a 'Constituent Assembly' of Democracy to replace the House of Commons. Not surprisingly such calls elicited little response and Herbert Burrows was totally exasperated. Declaring the SDF bankrupt he said that he was 'not prepared to plough the sands politically for the next thirty years', and he urged the Federation to negotiate with the Labour Party.⁸¹ His opinions received added weight when, at the second General Election in December 1910, the SDF could only afford to run one official candidate, Hyndman at Burnley. The SDF manifesto now forcibly advocated a vote against the Government. The Liberals, it argued, were 'always the more hypocritical and treacherous of the two great factions.'⁸² As in Rochdale, many Socialist voters thought otherwise, and their votes switched from Hyndman to the Liberals. He again finished bottom of the poll and his vote was down by over 1,000. Hyndman was totally downhearted, beaten he thought by

'ignorance, poverty and weight of money', and he accepted that 'with a very poor population promises of great social improvement in the future cannot hold their ground against profuse expenditure in the present.'⁸³ He decided not to contest the seat again.

It is clear that the separation of the SDF from the Labour Party was a major barrier to its progress in Lancashire, but this did not become evident prior to 1906. Indeed the Federation flourished in the county between 1903 and 1906. 1906 was a significant turning point in the history of the Socialist movement in Britain. According to Stephen Yeo 'the fact was that much of what Socialists had fought for was being talked about from within utterly different theoretical perspectives, particularly in the years of Liberal government from 1906 onwards.'⁸⁴ This caused a crisis within the ILP,⁸⁵ as it attempted to define its position as a Socialist party within the wider ranks of the Labour Party, but failed to lead to a similar re-examination within the ranks of the SDF. Criticism of the Federation's policy there was, much of it from the Lancashire branches, but overwhelmingly its conference reaffirmed the larger mission of the SDF. Their practical programme should be subordinated to the ultimate ideal, they were to lead the working-class movement:

Should we mix with the slow moving crowd....

Or should we rather dash forward, place ourselves
in front and explain to the crowd the meaning and

significance of the road, the aim of the journey,
and in general act as guides....The ILP chose the
first, the SDF the second.⁸⁶

Yet locally SDF branches were campaigning for palliatives, playing a role in the trade unions, and helping to form LRCs. Even Quelch, as chairman of the London Trades Council, attended Labour Party Conferences. Moreover they placed great stress on electioneering at both local and national level, not simply for propaganda purposes as with the 'impossibilist' groupings of the SLP and SPGB, but with a genuine desire to achieve results and a belief that Socialism could be achieved through Parliament. This uneasy mixture of reformism and impossibilism was exacerbated by the leadership's temptation to swim with the tide of political disenchantment with Labour which existed after 1906. The consequence was that the SDF 'guides' were faced with a confused audience, even in that SDF stronghold of Burnley. As Jeffrey Hill points out, even there the supporters of the traditional trade union line 'were apt to regard the social-democrats as political pariahs',⁸⁷ and Hyndman himself admitted after his defeat in 1910 that a failure to address issues of immediate importance to the working class had cost him dearly. The lack of a rapprochement between the SDF and the Labour Party in Burnley and Rochdale meant a failure to return a Labour candidate before the First World War, and in Nelson and Blackburn the demise of the SDF. Other SDF strongholds such as Northampton and Aberdeen suffered similar declines. One is forced to the conclusion, with Jeffrey Hill, that 'the L.R.C. had room for and need

of a Socialist left-wing, and in rejecting this position the S.D.F. rejected working class unity.'⁸⁹

Not until the electoral disasters of 1910 did the Social-Democratic Federation begin self-examination in some earnest; a few became totally disillusioned with the SDF, J. B. Askew for example switching to the ILP.⁹⁰ Others, including Tom Mann and Guy Bowman, rejected political action and took up the syndicalist cause.⁹¹ The Lancashire branches, Herbert Burrows, Thomas Kennedy, and others continued to espouse the reunification of the SDF and the Labour Party. Kennedy's assessment of the SDF's position in 1911 is worth noting. 'Ten years ago', he said, 'we threw away an opportunity which we ourselves created. We refused to lead the British working class movement from the inside. Events have proved the impossibility of our leading it from the outside.'⁹² They had adopted 'a policy of isolation and negative criticism which, from the point of view of electoral success, has been a complete failure.' He accused the Federation of waiting 'like Micawber...for something to turn up...to give us our reward.' But his shrewdest thrust was aimed at the SDF's so-called 'middle course' between impossibilism and compromise. For a Social-Democratic Party which aimed at political power, Kennedy argued, such a policy was fatuous. It was justifiable only if they were simply 'a propagandist body aiming at the conversion of public opinion, likely sooner or later to be expressed through other parties.'⁹³ Kennedy, like Carstairs Matheson, the 'impossibilist', some ten years earlier, had pinpointed the fundamental problem. In trying to bridge the

gap between reformist tactics and revolutionary aims the SDF had succeeded in becoming neither one thing nor the other. As so often in the past the Federation sought its salvation in Socialist unity. This was now to be achieved by a direct appeal to the rank and file of the Socialist movement, over the heads of the ILP leaders. Before examining the events which culminated in the formation of the British Socialist Party, it is worth re-emphasising the diversity of method and organisation which existed under the umbrella of the Social-Democratic Federation. The Lancashire branches had opted for a Labour alliance policy which had gained them a significant role in the political life of North-East Lancashire, but which eventually confronted them with a dilemma they were unable to solve. In Yorkshire the branches which maintained a viable existence adopted a different approach.

The Dewsbury by-election of 1902 had given the SDF its first real success in Yorkshire. Its immediate result was the demise of the ILP in Dewsbury, and the Federation gained a prominent new recruit in Edward Robertshaw Hartley, who was thoroughly disillusioned both with the ILP leadership and with the Labour Party. Hartley founded a new branch of the SDF in Bradford early in 1904. Elsewhere in Yorkshire the Federation profited from the general Socialist revival in the middle part of the decade, establishing far firmer bases in Leeds and Sheffield and breaking new ground in other areas.

By June 1911 there were 14 branches of the Social-Democratic Federation in Yorkshire, the maximum extent of its penetration, and although they were dwarfed by the presence of the ILP they were able to utilise to some extent the frustration of many ILPers after 1906 to put down firm roots. The Yorkshire branches, however, approximated far more to the traditional stereotype of the SDF than did the Lancashire branches. They were first and foremost 'propagandist' organisations, opposed to the Labour alliance and vehemently in favour of Socialist unity. Their aim was simply 'to make Socialists'.

In Dewsbury the SDF branch prospered after the by-election, forming offshoots in Ravensthorpe and Batley, drawing the Clarion Fellowship into membership and organising actively under the aegis of Friend Lister.⁹⁴ Its enhanced position was recognised by the conciliatory attitude of Ben Turner and the Trades Council, who were 'willing to smooth over the difficulties of the past and...were anxious to join all progressive forces to work amicably together at the next election'.⁹⁵ A lengthy report of the branch's history and an assessment of its prospects appeared in Justice in September 1902, and it is evident that at this time they were at pains to moderate their image in the hope of building upon their modest success. They were aiming, said the report, to attract not simply working-class recruits but those from the professional and commercial classes too:

it is absolutely necessary the movement should have
as respectable an appearance as any other movement,

religious or otherwise. So, by being careful in our personal appearance and general conduct we endeavour to give an air of respectability to the movement which, although a detail, is of more importance than many imagine.⁹⁶

This air of respectability was further emphasised by the arrangements at the branch's new premises on Victoria Road. Previously, to be a member of the SDF one had to be a member of the Socialist Club, and evidently a number had objected to this. These objections intensified when, in September 1902, the Club became licensed and later affiliated to the Working Mens' Club and Institute Union. There was obviously a considerable temperance element within the SDF who feared that club life might dilute the political emphasis of the branch, a complaint which was frequently echoed in both SDF and ILP. Consequently the club was separated from the main part of the premises and one could now join the SDF without being a club member. Great stress was placed on education as a means of attracting new members. Thus, although the Clarion Fellowship had amalgamated with the SDF, it maintained its separate identity, 'for those who are interested but not sure. We then pay careful attention to him, and by paying a little attention to him, he soon passes into the next standard'.⁹⁷ A discussion class was started and of course the library catered for the educational nourishment of the members too. There was 'not a club in the whole of Great Britain that had a library as good as Dewsbury Socialist Club', recalled one

member.⁹⁸ Finally the branch, recognising the damage that charges of atheism had done to Quelch's prospects, declared that anyone, whatever their religious persuasion, was welcome to join.

This aura of moderate respectability, augmented by an emphasis on self-improvement via education, found additional expression in the branch's attempt to create a Socialist culture for its members. The successful garden party in August 1902⁹⁹ was the first in a series of such events and tea-parties, musical evenings and dances were regular features too. SDFers could also join the Clarion Cycling Club on its excursions. Indeed the Clarion influence in this branch remained remarkably pervasive, and themes of brotherhood and fellowship, 'love and peace', and Blatchford-style appeals to the workers were common.¹⁰⁰ Socialist propaganda though was the raison d'être of the branch and, encouraged by Quelch's result, the SDF entered the municipal lists for the first time in November 1902. Harry Wood's campaign in All Saints Ward was a moderately successful propaganda exercise. He urged the municipalisation of coal, milk and all the other necessities of life, the erection of good, sanitary housing at rents sufficient only to cover construction and maintenance, and promised to act as a delegate if elected, leaving a signed resignation form with his committee to be used if he failed to fulfil his pledges. In common with most Dewsbury municipal contests the election was a very low-key affair and Wood came bottom of the poll. His opponents thanked him for his

honourable campaign and Wood replied simply that 'his hands were clean' and he had worked for his principles, which were spreading rapidly.¹⁰¹ All this was in stark contrast to Quelch's parliamentary campaign and reinforced the SDF's attempts at bridge-building.

Wood stood again in a by-election for Trinity Ward early the following year, against Lib-Lab George Thorpe, the President of the local Co-operative Society. In a somewhat more aggressive tone he declared that there was no difference between Liberals and Tories and castigated the indifference and apathy of the electors. He had tried, he said, 'in his humble way and his comrades had also tried to arouse interest. It was necessary and essential if they wanted to raise their status above its present level to take an intelligent view of the municipal affairs of the Borough.'¹⁰² Thorpe won comfortably¹⁰³ but the reasons for the SDF's moderate approach were soon apparent. In March 1903 168 delegates attended a Conference called by the Trades Council to consider the formation of a Labour Representation Committee for the Heavy Woollen District. Both James Ramsay MacDonald and Harry Quelch were present as Tom Myers put the resolution for the organisation of an LRC. Immediately the Socialists placed an amendment urging the adoption of a programme of principle, namely 'the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange.' Bowers of the SDF spoke forcibly: 'there was a class war waging, and that war could not be ended until the proposed objects included in the amendment

were realised. It was no use having a Labour Party which did not go to the whole extent of the amendment.'¹⁰⁴ Ben Turner was dismissive. 'They had seen enough of programmes'. The conference had been called, 'not to propagate one ism or a combination of isms, but to unite a Labour force of the three divisions, Spen Valley, Morley and the Dewsbury Parliamentary Borough.'¹⁰⁵ MacDonald agreed, advocating a platform broad enough to include all workers, and the Socialist amendment was lost 146-22. Nonetheless, the SDF was not hostile. Quelch reaffirmed his position of 'friendly neutrality' and wished the LRC well, although urging it to adopt a principled position, and Myers could report soon afterwards that 'We are at work drawing up a constitution for a local L.R.C. in which the S.D.F. are taking part and showing a reasonable spirit.'¹⁰⁶ This co-operation lasted until August, when the SDF ceased to attend meetings. The alliance had broken down because of the LRC decision to nominate Ben Turner as parliamentary candidate, in spite of the fact that Quelch had been re-nominated by the SDF immediately after the by-election. Myers and Turner had obviously intrigued to persuade union branches to declare against Quelch 'on grounds of tactics not principles'.¹⁰⁷ At a Trades Council Meeting it was stated that they would follow the advice of the national LRC 'not to oppose their friends but to promote candidatures where there were vacancies and opportunities',¹⁰⁸ a decision confirmed by Turner at the Yorkshire Trades Council Conference in July. If they limited themselves solely to the Labour Party

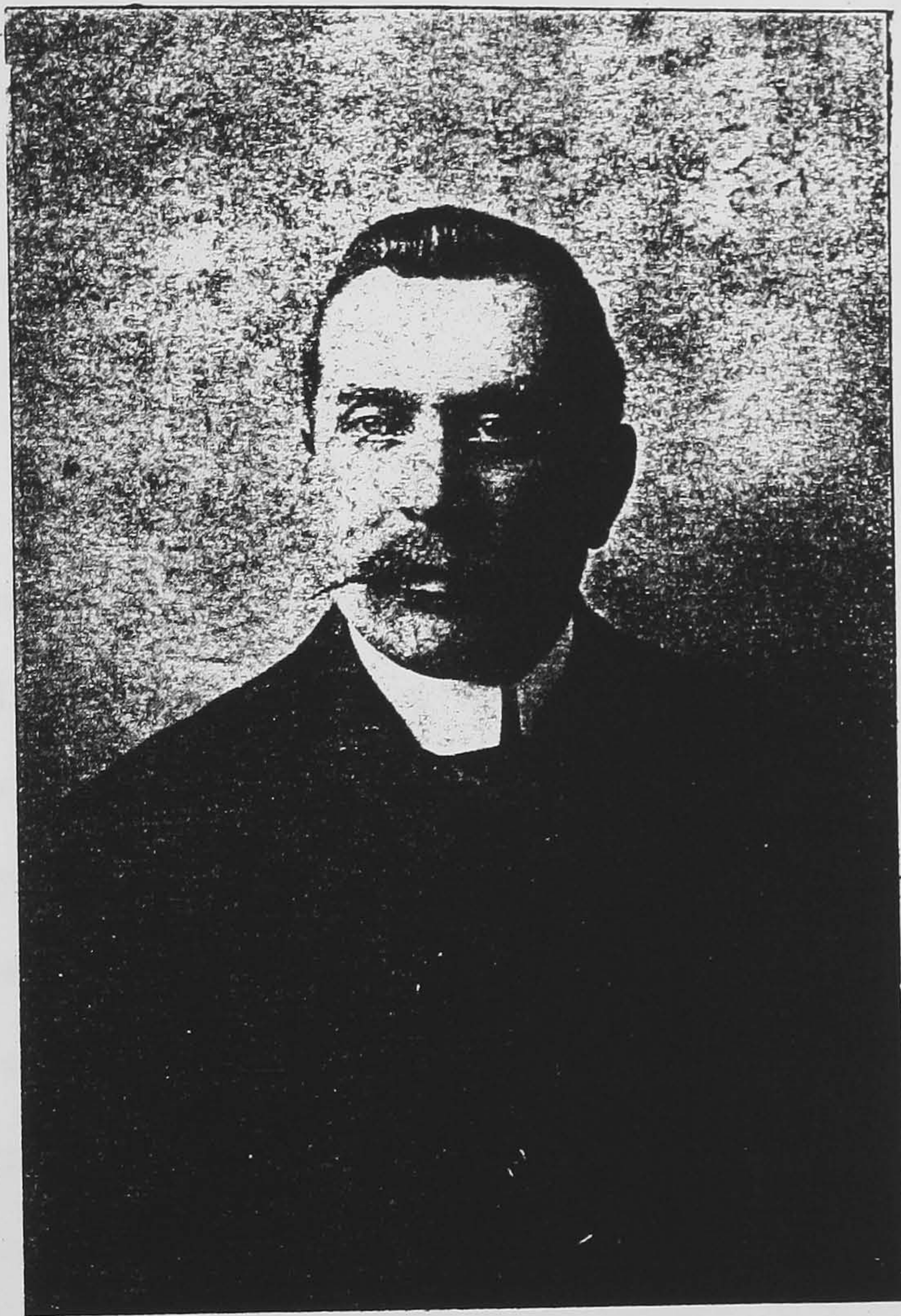
men, he said, they would be 'choked off the face of the earth.',¹⁰⁹

The decision to run Turner was not without opposition from outside the SDF and quite obviously the ill-feeling from the by-election lingered on. 'Old Dewsburian' thought that Turner 'did not possess the qualifications so far as intelligence and ability are concerned...In Mr. Quelch we had a man who could lead, a man of intelligence, well read and a thinker.'

¹¹⁰ This was a little unfair to Turner, who was well respected in local Trade Union circles, but an irrevocable breach was only avoided by Quelch's decision to stand for Southampton rather than Dewsbury. The reason given was that his chances of success were far greater in that two-member constituency, where a deal with the Liberals was expected, rather than in Dewsbury where a three-cornered contest made it something 'of the nature of a forlorn hope.'¹¹¹ The Dewsbury branch agreed, arguing that the time for fighting propaganda elections was over; electoral success was needed and Southampton provided a more favourable opportunity.¹¹² The episode demonstrated a certain weakness in SDF strategy; this switching of candidates was common, rendering a good deal of hard work in constituencies wasted and laying the Federation open to charges of opportunism. Quelch had a base to build upon in Dewsbury, and the reason for his departure was, quite clearly, the LRC's intention to run Turner. The Federation was not prepared to push the issue to a damaging conclusion,

realistically recognising that Quelch would not win a vote against Turner in the LRC.

A final campaign in All Saints Ward marked the end of SDF electioneering in Dewsbury until the reorganisation of the Borough in 1910. After another defeat Harry Wood remarked that he had been urged to drop the 'Socialist' label as a passport to electoral success, but 'Honest men could not possibly have confidence in him if he threw over his principles.'¹¹³ This set the hallmark for the Social-Democratic Federation's presence in the borough; it would campaign for Socialist principles free from any encumbrances or alliances. There was never any further question of affiliation to the LRC, but they did support Turner in 1906 with both local and national SDF speakers. Essentially the Federation became a propagandist body pure and simple. At the centre of its activity was the summer propaganda season, when SDF meetings would be held on Sundays in Dewsbury Market Place, in Batley when there was a branch there, and occasionally in Heckmondwike and Mirfield. By far the most sought after and popular speakers were Quelch and William Gee, and they both made regular visits to Dewsbury. Gee conducted a series of summer 'missions' which led, said The Reporter, to 'a distinct eruption of Socialist propaganda in this district', during which 'the wild and whirring virulence of the market place' could be heard.¹¹⁴ To Dewsbury SDFers, however, Gee as a propagandist was 'a full team with a dog under the waggon.'¹¹⁵ He was immensely popular in West Yorkshire with both SDF and ILP branches, an



W. GEE, Socialist Candidate for Rossendale.

The principles I am here to affirm and defend—the principles of Social-Democracy—are the principles which alone can redeem humanity from the degrading and oppressing results of our present industrial anarchy.

William Gee, the 'Socialist Dreadnought', a popular SDF propagandist in Lancashire and Yorkshire.

'intellectual and scientific' treat according to the Huddersfield ILP.¹¹⁶ During the winter months the branch was quiet, with an occasional indoor rally and star speaker to remind the town of its existence. In 1906, for example, Hyndman was booked for the Industrial Hall, an event which would appeal to an audience far beyond the SDF's membership, as The Reporter explained.

He has a commanding personality - tall, stoutly-built, with a long flowing brown beard and eyes which bespeak the enthusiast. He has a quiet style of speaking, and has a pleasing way of leading the laughter when, as often happened on Monday night, he made a joke. His speech was of that type which is better to listen to than to read for cold type cannot reproduce the mannerisms or gestures which make as much for enjoyment and appreciation of a speech by a man like Mr. Hyndman as the words themselves.¹¹⁷

The Socialist orators were entertainers too, their visits a stimulus to the members in towns like Dewsbury, often isolated from other branches. This particular meeting though was illustrative of the failure of the SDF to clearly define its policy. Pickles, President of the Huddersfield Trades Council and an SDF member, opened the proceedings by declaring that trade unionism and Socialism were inseparable whereas Hyndman, in concluding his speech, argued that unions were a hindrance

to the development of the people. Dewsbury SDFers it seems supported Hyndman; they had ignored a two year old strike of coal miners in Ravensthorpe and Harry Broome had dismissed SDF intervention with these words: 'If the miners themselves did not wish to assist their own class then he thought it was no use others bothering.'¹¹⁸

This lack of intervention in local struggles in fact typified the Dewsbury SDF. In January 1907 they launched the Dewsbury Social-Democrat, a monthly publication which ran for two years.¹¹⁹ Generally speaking the journal ignored local events unless they were directly related to SDF activities. Articles were culled from Justice or the Clarion; they consisted of expositions of Socialism, 'simplifying and amplifying our position with regard to current topics and Social and Industrial Evolution and Revolution.'¹²⁰ Clifford Ragan urged the workers of Dewsbury to think for themselves, to study Socialism, but the Socialist themselves were not bringing about Socialism, which was the inevitable consequence of economic development. What then was their task? 'We simply point out this development, its direction, its ultimate result, and also the obstacles which stand in the way and which must be removed if we are to avoid violent revolution.'¹²¹ The Dewsbury Social-Democrats did not see it as their duty to confront individual aspects of capitalist society but capitalism as a whole. Their priority was the propagation of Socialist ideas, 'the making of Socialists', which set them apart from the

everyday struggles of the working class and led them, in Alex Callinicos's phrase, to 'abstract propagandism.'¹²² The staged debate was a favoured form of propaganda, and one between Harry Quelch and the Reverend Anstey in May 1906 aroused considerable interest and gave the SDF an opportunity to air Marxian doctrines in the local press for some considerable time. 'Something quite novel in the way of Socialist Sunday evening gatherings'¹²³ took place at the Theatre Royal, Batley, one Sunday evening in March. Victor Fisher, a prominent London SDFer, and his wife, billed as Madam San Carolo, gave a lecture recital and sang the revolutionary songs of various countries.

Mr. Fisher, who looked more like an artist than a Socialist worker, with his closely trimmed black beard and velvet lounge coat, lectured on the various revolutions of the democracy in various lands, and Madame San Carolo - strikingly attired in evening dress of a vivid red, with drapings of chiffon in the same bright colour flowing down from her hair, while a necklet of gold coins completed the somewhat bizarre effect - sang the songs of revolution in many languages.¹²⁴

The aim of the evening was to demonstrate that the Socialists of the SDF were not simply Socialists in an economic sense but had a close connection with all which contributed to the material and physical well-being of man, whether it be art,

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

(S. D. F.)

Theatre Royal, Batley, SUNDAY, MARCH 22nd, 1908.

SONGS OF REVOLUTION.

Lecture - Recital

BY

VICTOR FISHER & IRENE SAN CAROLO,

L.R.C.M. / A.R.C.M.

SYNOPSIS.—Folk Songs reveal the Soul of a People. National Characteristics intensified by popular excitement. Two Phases of Revolution reflected in Songs. National Freedom must precede Political Liberty.

FIRST GROUP.—Examples of popular protests against Foreign domination. Union of all Classes in the Spirit of Nationality.

- a—"Scots wha hae wi Wallace bled" and Welsh War March
- b—Irish insurrectionary ballad, "The Shan Van Voght"
- c—Greek Hymn of Liberty.
- d { Italian Call to Unity, "Frattello d'Italia"
- Garibaldi War Hymn.
- e—Dutch Call to Independence.
- f—Transvaal National Anthem.
- g—Hindo Patriotic Song, "Motherland I bow down to Thee."
- Recitation—Chitral Border ballad, "The Malakhand Mother"

Various English expressions of discontent under the Wage slavery that originated in Feudal organisation, and necessarily increased with the acquisitions and consequent requirements of ancient nobles and modern plutocrats. Chattel slavery abolished; Wage slavery fostered. The "Divine Right of Kings" discovered by Henry 8th destroyed by Cromwell. Puritan Psalm singing and Battle Hymns. Jacobite songs. The rise of a middle class. The Bourgeois Revolution in France. Modern voicings of the Rights of Man.

SECOND GROUP.—Folk Songs of Revolt against domestic tyranny and intolerable conditions of Labour. Class antagonism.

- a—Villain's Song, "John Ball's Incitement"
- b—Slave's Hallelujah Song "John Brown"
- c—Chartist Song, Ernest Jones' Words
- Songs of the French Revolution
 - d { "La Carmagnole"
 - "La Marseillaise"
 - e—"La Commune"
 - f—"Auf Sozialisten"
 - g—"Warschavianka," and "L'Internationale"

Doors open 6 p.m.

Commence 6.30 p.m.

Circle & Stalls (Reserved) 6d. Pit & Gallery Silver Collection

TICKETS may be had from J. P. AUSTY, Northgate, Dewsbury, and Co. 69, 70 & 71, Batley and Richmond Works.

Poster advertising a Dewsbury and Batley SDF Social Evening.

literature or science. Rather than an integral part of the working-class movement SDFers in Dewsbury tended to be a group apart, identifiable by the red ties they sported. In every way they typified the branches described in Justice, which 'have become crystallised into little groups of propagandists scurrying to the usual number of meetings, weekly or monthly, with no thought beyond that!'¹²⁵

The tendency to propagandism became more marked after 1906, as the Dewsbury branch followed the national trend of increased hostility to the Labour Party. They were no longer prepared to support Turner as parliamentary candidate for the borough and they began to look to Socialist unity as an alternative to the Labour Party. In this they were doubtless influenced by Hartley, an influential figure amongst the Socialists after 1902, and an ardent exponent of unity under the SDF umbrella.¹²⁶ The first suggestion of a Socialist alternative to Turner came in August 1907 when delegates from the Dewsbury ILP,¹²⁷ the Batley Clarion Club, the Dewsbury Socialist Club and the Dewsbury SDF met to discuss a Parliamentary candidate. No firm decision was reached and there appeared to be some disagreement over the idea. Indeed the SDF were present as observers at an LRC meeting shortly afterwards where Turner was adopted, whilst the Clarion organisation complained that they had not been invited which was 'not conducive to unity'. The SDF position clearly hardened after that and both Victor Grayson and Hartley, visiting Dewsbury, issued veiled threats to the Labour Party as to the adoption of a Socialist candidate. This was partly owing to frustration

at the Labour Party's feeble performance in Parliament but also expressive of a deep-rooted feeling that the Labour Party was reaping the benefits of ten years Socialist agitation in the constituency. They pointed out that 1902 had been the only occasion upon which the Liberals had polled a minority of the overall votes cast and that Turner in 1906, with all the advantages, had got only 1,000 votes more than Quelch. They thought that the SDF had 'completely vindicated its right to run a candidate if it so wills',¹²⁸ and Harry Wood felt that although Turner was a friend of his 'he could have no connection with a candidate whose policy and whose mind were so confused with relation to the issues which were at stake.'¹²⁹

Before these tendencies had crystallised a by-election was caused by the elevation of Runciman to the cabinet. The Socialists had no time to organise a candidate and Turner was left unhindered as the Labour Party nominee. He certainly proposed a more thorough-going Socialist platform than in 1906, largely as a concession to his Socialist critics, and the Reporter attributed his poor performance to this.¹³⁰ The Social-Democrats viewed it differently; that 2,446 voters had turned out in appalling weather was, they felt, a tribute to their Socialist idealism. When Turner, thoroughly disheartened, announced his decision to stand down they seized the opportunity. A United Socialist Committee was formed, representing the Dewsbury, Batley and Earlsheaton branches of the SDF, the Clarion Scouts, the Dewsbury Socialist Club and the Dewsbury ILP.

This was to function for electoral purposes only, any idea of fusion being emphatically disclaimed.¹³¹ Reading between the lines, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the SDF's motive for seeking an accommodation was to solve its financial problems,¹³² and certainly they had no intention of allowing their standpoint to be subjugated. It was a stratagem to enable them to announce Bert Killip, the Leeds SDF organiser, as their candidate in August 1908. Killip opened his campaign in Batley Market Place at the end of September, but the local LRC were singularly unimpressed. 'An S.D.F. candidate was supposed to be in the field, but the L.R.C. had nothing to do with the matter....It was to be hoped, however, an arrangement might be come to on real democratic lines.'¹³³

That Killip's was intended to be a mere propagandist campaign was abundantly clear. He didn't expect to win, he said, 'But he did hope to do what every Social-Democrat considered the best thing, that was to keep the Liberal out.'¹³⁴ But with Ben Riley, the Huddersfield bookbinder and councillor, intent on standing for Labour there seemed every possibility of a damaging split in Labour ranks. In the event all the arguments became 'much ado about nothing'. The United Socialist Committee collapsed¹³⁵ as the Dewsbury ILP rejoined its fellows in Thornhill and Batley. Killip withdrew because he was unable to find the requisite finance and Riley stood down in order to avoid a split with the Liberals. No Labour candidate stood in either of the 1910 elections. The Labour and Socialist movement in Dewsbury at the end of 1909 mirrored

the situation nationally. There was disillusionment with the Labour Party in Socialist ranks, a reluctance to clash with the Liberals in Labour ranks. Socialist unity seemed to provide an alternative to Labour, although in Dewsbury it flickered only briefly at this stage. Many Socialists opted out of the established parties, joining the ranks of Blatchford's 'unattached'. The Clarion Cyclists and the Dewsbury Socialist Society were as active as either the SDF or the ILP at this time. Market place rhetoric could not hide the fact that the main Socialist organisations had made little progress in Dewsbury in the first decade of the twentieth century. The SDF had between 25 and 30 paying members in 1907 and 1908,¹³⁶ excluding the short-lived Earlsheaton branch and the small Batley organisation. It also floated a Women's Circle in 1908. The ILP in Dewsbury had only 30 members, Batley 42, and Mirfield existed in name only. Thornhill Lees was somewhat stronger.¹³⁷ Blatchford however was clearly correct to suggest that there existed a much larger, amorphous mass of Socialist sentiment, and in Dewsbury much of the credit for this must go to the SDF, which maintained unbroken propaganda for 13 years. Its propagandist stance at least maintained its identity and suggested a distinct alternative to Labourism. Throughout 1910 and 1911 its attacks on Labour mounted, whilst the massive industrial unrest caused it to reappraise its political stance. The SDF in Dewsbury was ready and willing to enter the new British Socialist Party at the end of 1911, which resulted in a radical change of direction for the branch. Their

Socialist faith is exemplified by the hand-painted mirror still hanging on the clubroom walls, a rising sun framed by the words 'Socialism, The Only Hope of the Workers'.¹³⁸

The SDF branches in Bradford and Leeds exhibited many of the characteristics of their counterpart in Dewsbury, but they had one distinct advantage in that both could boast an exceptionally able organiser and figure of some repute within the Socialist movement. Edward Hartley joined the SDF in 1902, disappointed at the ILP/LRC refusal to back Quelch in Dewsbury, and was instrumental in reforming the Bradford branch early in 1904. A prominent ILPer, with a strong base in the Bradford Moor area, Hartley was able to build an effective campaigning body, particularly in East Bradford. The Leeds branches appointed Bert Killip, 'a youngster with a future before him',¹³⁹ as organiser in 1907 and he injected new life into the SDF with an aggressive and abrasive style of operation. Both Hartley and Killip were openly hostile to the Labour Party and strong proponents of Socialist unity, and this emphasis coloured the activities of the Social-Democratic Federation in these two cities.

The original SDF branch in Bradford had collapsed at the end of 1897, leaving one or two isolated members like Charlie Glyde and Ben Wilson, the president of the Shop Assistants' Union. But Glyde was an individualistic Socialist, unlikely to organise a new branch, and Wilson was preoccupied with union affairs. Only with Hartley's accession did the Federation revive its activities, and the branch was restarted after a

Eastern Division

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION.



VOTE
FOR
HARTLEY
SOCIALIST CANDIDATE.

Printed & Published by H. Beaumont & Son, Laisterdyke.

Edward Robertshaw Hartley, SDF
Parliamentary candidate for East
Bradford, 1906 and 1910.

Hyndman visit, in October 1903, as part of his campaign in opposition to tariff reform. 'I had a packed meeting here last night', wrote Hyndman to Justice. 'The great towns of Yorkshire are getting far beyond mere "Labourism", I rejoice to say'.¹⁴⁰ Their initial meeting place was the Clarion Club at Whetley Hill, but they later moved to rooms above the Rawson Place entrance to the new Bradford market. As in Dewsbury the emphasis was primarily upon education and propaganda, with discussion and industrial history classes featuring prominently in branch activities. Bradford though was a far more active propagandist organisation than its Dewsbury counterpart, the unemployed agitation being particularly to the fore. Mass rallies, deputations to the Guardians, sieges of the workhouse, and a 'landgrab',¹⁴¹ brought the SDF into the limelight in Bradford and placed it firmly in the mainstream of the SDF tradition. As elsewhere they were equivocal about the use of violence. Hartley condemned window-smashing and other illegal activities,¹⁴² yet these sentiments contrasted strongly with his violent language in the council chamber after the Postmaster-General's visit in 1908.¹⁴³ The presence of Hartley and Glyde on the council was a major boost to the SDF, although neither of them was elected on an SDF ticket, and it highlighted a major preoccupation of the Bradford branch, municipal electioneering, which made it almost unique in Yorkshire SDF circles. They put forward candidates at every municipal election between 1906 and 1911,

both as a propaganda exercise and in the belief that municipal Socialism was possible. Thus Hartley's answer to unemployment was to elect Socialists to the council, and D. B. Briggs, SDF candidate for East Bowling, showed 'that he had a thorough grasp of the possibilities of the further extension of municipal enterprises.'¹⁴⁴ These annual election campaigns, the unemployed agitation, the almost ritual 'free speech fight', history and economics classes, a book club and the whole gamut of social activities ranging from whist drives to trips to Bolton Abbey made Bradford something of 'a stronghold of the S.D.F.'¹⁴⁵ It boasted 100 members in 1907,¹⁴⁶ although they were dwarfed by an ILP membership of over 1,000, formed a second branch in East Bradford in 1909, and also assisted the formation of branches in Shipley and Birkenshaw. A solid cadre of members was built up: George Malton, a barber and Ruskin Hall corresponding student; Heywood Beaumont, a printer; D. B. Briggs of Low Moor, perpetual election candidate; Doctor Dessin, close associate of Hyndman. Hartley, of course, towered above all, and his two parliamentary campaigns in East Bradford lent added stature to the branch. These contests are instructive as to ILP/SDF relationships both locally and nationally and they shed light on the growing urgency of the call by the SDF for Socialist unity.

Hartley had always been antipathetic towards the unions, viewing them as a reactionary force holding back the working-

class movement. Inevitably therefore he was hostile to the idea of a Socialist/trade union alliance. His was very much the 'orthodox-Marxist', Quelchite point of view, admirably expressed during a debate in Manchester, where he likened the Labour Party to a child:

It was an excellent idea to lead the child, but if it was bigger than you, and refused to go? Nay! What if the child was so big that it not only refused to go with you but turned round and carried you where you never intended to go?¹⁴⁷

Yet Hartley was also fully aware of the absurdities of the situation created by the SDF's decision to withdraw from the LRC. His old friend Fred Jowett couldn't support Hartley in East Bradford because he would not sign the constitution of the Labour Party. Harry Quelch would be disloyal to his trade union connection with the Labour Party if he supported Hyndman at Burnley. Will Thorne apparently managed to saddle both horses simultaneously. Hartley's solution to this impasse was Socialist unity. Innately distrustful of the leadership of both Socialist groupings, he urged the rank and file to demonstrate their commonsense and unite in the face of the common enemy - capitalism. And the attitude of this united Socialist party to the Labour Party? 'of course, they must have an alliance with the Labour Party, but it must not be an alliance which dominated and absorbed Socialists.'¹⁴⁸ Each party should work on its own lines,

for its own ideals, and ally for all objects held in common.

Hartley's philosophy explains his later political career in Bradford. He hoped, through his own example, to unite the Socialist forces in the city and thereby inspire unity nationally. If the stronghold of the ILP could be brought into union with the SDF then, Hartley believed, the rest of the country would follow within twelve months.¹⁴⁹ The ideal vehicle for such a strategy was a parliamentary campaign and Bradford East was a most promising constituency, particularly in view of Hartley's local reputation. It was the most working-class constituency in Bradford. Unfortunately events in Lancashire were mirrored in Bradford, for national developments ruled out unity at both local and national level. At this time the ILP and LRC were formulating a policy on the selection of candidates, and were very concerned that only those seats which were potentially winnable should be contested. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Dewsbury by-election they were insistent that all local Labour organisations should be consulted before candidatures were given official sanction. These conditions often conflicted with the impulsive desire of local ILP branches and LRCs to run candidates at the earliest opportunity and heated arguments resulted, the furore in the Colne Valley over Grayson being the supreme example. What was certain was that no support would be given to candidates running without the LRC label, and the animosity of MacDonald, Glasier, and Hardie towards

the SDF ruled out any LRC/ILP support for Hartley in Bradford East. It was felt that this was simply another SDF intrigue to gain parliamentary representation, and by using ILP funds to boot!¹⁵⁰ Moreover, sanctioning Hartley would direct resources from Bradford West and weaken Jowett's chances there.

Locally however relations were much more cordial, a reflection of Hartley's status within the ILP there, and one is left yet again wondering what might have been the direction of British Socialism if local initiatives had not been stifled by national bureaucracies after 1900 or, conversely, if the Federation had remained within the LRC as a left-wing grouping. Starved of resources, the SDF mounted what was essentially a propaganda campaign, boasting proudly that 'No canvassing was done and no conveyances were used.'¹⁵¹ The distribution of handbills and the chalking of pavements were the limits of their efforts. Yet a mass meeting at St. George's Hall shortly before the election showed what might have transpired. Billed as a pro-Hartley rally with the Countess of Warwick as the main attraction, it turned into a joint demonstration for Hartley and Jowett, attended by all the prominent figures of the Bradford ILP. From the platform Jowett wished Hartley every success and referred to the ILP and SDF as simply two sections of the one Socialist party.¹⁵² The local ILP paper felt that 'The S.D.F. friends have behaved with scrupulous fairness throughout the campaign...have both tacitly and expressedly recognised priority of claim by the Western Division.'¹⁵³ Jowett won a famous victory, pushing

the Liberals into third place, but Hartley also polled 3,090 votes, which was admitted by all shades of opinion to be a considerable success for the Socialists. Like Hobson in Rochdale Hartley had proved that there was a sizeable body of support for the Socialist option as opposed to the Labour alliance, certainly up to 1906.

The SDF was impressed by the encouraging progress of its Bradford branch and the Federation's Annual Conference for 1906 was held in the city. Glyde was able to report that the six Bradford delegates to the ILP Conference had strict instructions to vote for fusion, a further tribute to Hartley's efforts in that direction. But the fact that he and Dessin voted on opposite sides in the debate on re-affiliation to the Labour Party demonstrated that the Bradford branch was as unsure over the issue as the parent body. Hartley was elected to the provincial section of the Executive, a position he retained until his departure for New Zealand in 1911. His opinions were clearly expressed - the united Socialist party must come first, and it could then decide on the question of affiliation to the Labour Party. This remained the position of the Bradford SDF. To those in the ILP who argued that their strategy was, and must be, firmly orientated towards Labour, Hartley retorted that 'A Socialist is a Socialist wanting Socialism and there is as wide a difference of temperament amongst the various members of the I.L.P. themselves as between them and the most extreme members of the S.D.F.'¹⁵⁴ Between 1906 and 1911

To Workers and Idlers ALIKE!

The Only VITAL SUBJECT in the WORLD
... TO-DAY is ...

SOCIALISM

Don't be misled by the calumnies and falsehoods of Political
Mugwumps and Capitalistic Press Hacks,

Who either Can't or
Daren't tell the truth about

SOCIALISM

Come and hear it expounded by one of the MEN who
have made it their Life Study.

W. GEE,

(Of NORTHAMPTON), speaks at the

WOODROYD COUNCIL SCHOOL,

(BOYS' DEPARTMENT)

Thursday, January 30th, 1908.

J. M. HOLDSWORTH takes the Chair at 7-30 p.m.

East Bradford Parliamentary Campaign

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

BRADFORD
BRANCH.

Club Rooms

Rawson Square.

Read "JUSTICE" 1d. Weekly.

'Political Mugwumps' - A typical SDF propaganda Poster.

they seemed to be engaged in one long election campaign, whether at the municipal level or promoting Hartley for Parliament, and the message was insistent and clear - 'Socialists unite!' Success or failure was gauged in terms of the numbers of new members gained and the extent of the co-operation with the ILP. Thus Hartley's defeat and reduced poll in January 1910, although disappointing, was viewed positively in terms of recruitment and the diffusion of Socialist propaganda. 'Our methods are unique!' they proudly announced. 'No canvassing, no posters on the wall - nothing but educational methods, leaflets, literature and meetings.'¹⁵⁵ The reasons for his defeat were correctly analysed as a switch of Labour votes to the Liberal as a response to the issues of the Budget and the Lords, but that didn't matter. Socialist votes were clean votes, votes for principles, and the cause of Socialist unity had been advanced. There seemed to be some justification for this attitude. In 1911 the Railwaymen complained at a Trades Council meeting about the Liberal M.P.s vote on the Railway Bill and urged that a Labour man should oppose him at the next election. The ILP reaction to this request was that the SDF had first claim in East Bradford, and the SDF response was clearcut. 'We have planted the S.D.P. flag in the division and we are going to remain.'¹⁵⁶ Hartley's departure for New Zealand shortly afterwards did not alter the SDF's direction. They were fervent proponents of Socialist unity, their views encouraged by widespread duality of membership and co-operation between

the two bodies. The SDF in Bradford functioned as a kind of haven for left-wing ILPers dissatisfied with their own party's moderation; there they could preach the pure, unadulterated gospel of Socialism without cutting their links with organised Labour. Although the SDF, and Hartley in particular, were opposed to a formal Labour alliance they were never overtly hostile to the Labour Party or the trade unions in Bradford. In Leeds, however, the tension between the SDF and the Labour Party was far more marked.

Leeds was the oldest-established SDF branch in Yorkshire, having maintained a continuous existence since 1894. Its stronghold was in Armley which, at the turn of the century, was reinforced by a Central Leeds branch. Leeds Social-Democrats felt a keen sense of isolation, existing in 'the God-forsaken broad acres of Yorkshire as far as the S.D.F. is concerned',¹⁵⁷ and their activities were limited by the difficulties of attracting speakers to the city. Nonetheless they played a prominent role in the organisation of the unemployed, propagandised ceaselessly on Armley Moor and Woodhouse Moor, and instituted a Socialist Sunday School. Much like Dewsbury their activities revolved around the weekly propaganda meetings and the social life provided by the Socialist institute, with few attempts to link these activities to organised labour. The appointment of Ben Killip as organiser in 1907 though brought an aggressive new element to the fore. Killip, a Liverpudlian, had been

employed for seven years by Birkenhead Corporation as a lamplighter but was dismissed for political activity. He had then been employed as an organiser for J. W. Gott's British Secular League before being taken on by the Leeds SDF. A young man of 28 at this time he revitalised the Federation in the city, forming three new branches within six months and establishing a very successful trading department specialising in 'Red Flag' toffee. By mid-1908 the Leeds branches were holding a dozen meetings weekly, and by March 1909 Leeds Central alone reported nearly 100 members, after commencing operations with only six. The essentially propagandist nature of their operations meant little contact with the local LRC or ILP but relations were not particularly strained before Killip's arrival, and the various bodies co-operated occasionally for May Day demonstrations and the like. Killip however was actively hostile to Labourism and convinced that Socialism could win votes. He always attracted good crowds to his meetings for, as the Armley and Wortley News pointed out, 'Mr. Killip possesses the rare gift of making an otherwise dull and dry subject interesting.'

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When Leeds Corporation banned the sale of literature and collections in municipal parks Killip was arrested for defying the ban and his subsequent court case attracted further attention to his meetings. He therefore decided to test public support at the polls by standing for New Wortley Ward in 1909. The retiring councillor was Owen Connellan, secretary of the Leeds Trades and Labour Council. Thus

Leeds provides one of the few instances of an SDFer directly opposing a Labour man in an electoral contest.

Killip's motives are unclear. There was certainly the intention of extending SDF influence from Armley into neighbouring New Wortley and forming a branch there, but the primary aim was clearly to expose what Killip saw as Labour hypocrisy, expressed in the person of Connellan whom he regarded as nothing more than a Lib-Lab of the old school. Killip had been a loyal supporter of the Labour Party until four years ago, he said, but he had not paid for 'representation of a Liberal or Tory character'.¹⁵⁹ Whilst he had nothing personal against Connellan, the SDF had to 'dissociate themselves from such a compromising position',¹⁶⁰ the Labour Party being nothing more than the tool of the Liberal Party. Killip's candidature then was an extreme expression of that disillusionment with the Labour Party which flourished after 1906. It caused a furore in local Labour circles, for a number of prominent figures clearly sympathised with Killip's attitude to the performance of the Labour Party both in Parliament and on Leeds City Council, and also empathised with his suspicion of Connellan. Bill Morby, of Leeds Trades Council, for example, wished that Connellan 'could see his way to embrace Socialism as they understood it', and others expressed the view that Killip should be on the Council.¹⁶¹ But, confronted by an open challenge to the Labour Party they closed ranks behind Connellan, Morby referring to this 'opposition of an extraordinary character'.¹⁶² Even D. B. Foster, a man with

close SDF connections, after careful consideration, backed Connellan: 'he stood shoulder to shoulder with Councillor Connellan to establish a new party, with Socialism stirring in it for the life-blood and trade-union elements as the elements out of which they were to produce more and more Socialists as time went on'.¹⁶³

Killip was seen, and saw himself, as 'a Victor Grayson in the city of Leeds, fighting in the interests of the workers against the capitalists'.¹⁶⁴ He advocated an Eight-Hour Day in all Corporation departments as a means of reducing unemployment and promised to put his case in the most effective way possible, even 'if it meant being carried out, or the use of violence, or going to gaol'.¹⁶⁵ He, like Harry Wood in Dewsbury, promised an undated letter of resignation to his committee. His was a pure, unsullied Socialist campaign, and he would not sell the workers or mislead them like the Labour men. Labour, he said, were worse than the Tories or Liberals because at least the people knew that Tories and Liberals were their enemies. To Labour, of course, Killip was a wrecker, 'trying to disintegrate the Labour Party'. There could be no meeting of minds. What added piquancy to the contest was the visit of Will Thorne to Leeds to speak for Connellan, a supreme illustration of SDF incoherence. Thorne argued that he had promised to support Connellan some two months previously and said he would not allow Killip to bar him from an LRC platform. 'It was regrettable to find two sets of workmen who were fighting

for the same goal quarrelling over what was really a question of method as to how they were to get to that goal.'¹⁶⁶ This view found little favour with the Leeds SDF, who mounted a vitriolic attack upon Thorne, tellingly pointing out the sheer illogicality of his position. If he supported an SDF candidate he violated the LRC constitution; if he supported an LRC man without consulting the local SDF branch he violated the SDF constitution. At a rowdy meeting, where Thorne was called 'a coward and a traitor', Thorne refused to justify his stance and simply told the Leeds SDF to refer the position to the Executive if they so wished. This in fact they did, but the Federation's Annual Conference in 1910 moved the next question to avoid embarrassment for the Executive. They could not afford to lose their only Parliamentary spokesman, but the Leeds affair had demonstrated the sheer illogicality of the 'middle road'.

The bitter contest between SDF and Labour Party in New Wortley cost Connellan his seat. He was, not surprisingly, bitter: 'If ever there was a seat thrown away this was the one', he complained, castigating those who had 'Thrown their votes away'. There had been 'treachery in their midst'.¹⁶⁷ But the Socialists, in spite of the fact that Killip had only polled 168 votes, celebrated. With their Bradford comrades they counted success in terms of propaganda opportunities and membership gains. Their 168 votes were statements of principle which could never be reclaimed by 'Tory, Liberal or Labour

faking'. They had recruited amongst others Joseph Thornton, ex-ILP organiser, and Harold Clay, an ex-Labour Party member who was impressed by Killip's refusal to sacrifice his principles for popularity. Thus, to the bewilderment of the local press, 'Far from being despondent we understand that members of the S.D.P. had a royal time up at the West Leeds Socialist Institute.'¹⁶⁸ The SDF in Leeds continued its Socialist mission, undeterred by electoral failure. In New Wortley the following year Killip's result was derisory, yet their extreme propagandist position was further emphasised by Killip's resolution at the 1911 Conference that branches should not be allowed to join local Labour Parties. This was defeated, but by then they too were anticipating the formation of the British Socialist Party, that union of Socialists which would provide a route to power.

The Dewsbury, Leeds, and Bradford branches of the SDF typified the Federation in Yorkshire. Elsewhere only Hull, Sheffield and, belatedly, Halifax demonstrated much vitality. Sheffield promoted a parliamentary candidate in January 1910 and made determined efforts in municipal elections. Their most prominent member, Elsbury, eventually formed a new branch at Bolton-upon-Deane and there had the distinction of being the SDF's first elected representative in the county, gaining a seat on the Goldthorpe Urban District Council in 1911.¹⁶⁹ The Halifax branch was reformed in 1909 to rescue 'the blood red standard...out of the mire in which it has been dragged

by the quasi-Lib-Lab organisation',¹⁷⁰ and the Hull branch similarly survived by carrying a 'militant spirit abroad.' The Yorkshire branches suggested an alternative route to survival, if not to success, from that put forward by the Lancashire branches. Their propagandist stance maintained an independent spirit and a separate identity, whereas in Lancashire, as Jeffrey Hill has commented, the Labour alliance strategy posed the danger of the SDF losing its separate identity.¹⁷¹ The point is that whether in Lancashire or Yorkshire a minority group was likely either to be generally ignored or absorbed by the wider political Labour movement. The problem for the Social-Democratic Federation has been neatly assessed by Stephen Yeo in his study of the Reading branch. 'Coherence implied a certain separateness, which could be called by its political enemies "sectarianism" and which did involve organising as a sect. And yet dynamism generated an organisation deeply involved in the locality.'¹⁷² The better SDFers did the less they looked like they wanted to be, a problem clearly recognised by Hyndman, Irving and others who urged elected representatives not to forget their revolutionary intent. For both the Lancashire and Yorkshire branches the answer to their separate problems was looked for in the formation of one Socialist party.

NOTES.

1. Justice, 7 May 1904.
2. Ibid., 9 May 1903.
3. Ibid., 2 April 1904.
4. Ibid., 15 December 1906.
5. SDF, Annual Conference Report, 1908, pp.10-12.
6. Justice, 24 August 1907.
7. Ibid., 5 January 1907.
8. The SDF had suspected an LRC/Liberal electoral agreement as early as 1903 but at that time tended to dismiss the idea as fanciful. See, for example, 'Tattler' in Justice, 7 November 1903.
9. Ibid., 2 July 1904.
10. Ibid., 10 August 1907.
11. Ibid., 21 March 1908.
12. See, for example, J. B. Askew in Justice, 4 April 1908, and Quelch in Justice, 25 June 1910.
13. Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, p.155.
14. Justice, 16 February 1907.
15. Ibid., 20 August 1902.
16. Social-Democrat, August 1909.
17. Justice, 29 February 1908.
18. Quoted in Lenin on Britain, (1934), p.94.
19. Justice, 2 July 1910.
20. Ibid., 12 March, 1910.
21. Ibid., 18 April 1903.

22. Ibid., 4 March 1905.
23. Will Thorne's election manifesto, quoted in E. A. and G. H. Radice, Will Thorne, Constructive Militant, (1974), p.58.
24. Justice, 17 April 1909.
25. Ibid., 25 June 1910.
26. Ibid., 4 April 1908. Askew resigned from the SDF in 1910 over this very issue and joined the ILP.
27. Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, p.158.
28. Justice, 5 May 1906.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 30 May 1903.
31. See Chapter IX.
32. For membership figures see Watmough, op.cit., p.38.
33. Justice, 2 January 1904.
34. See Chapter IX.
35. Trodd, op.cit., p.331. An interesting account of Irving's career in Burnley is provided in P. Firth, Dan Irving and Municipal Socialism, (1983), a typed manuscript in Burnley Public Library.
36. Hill, 'Working-class Politics in Lancashire', p.328.
37. Justice, 5 April 1902.
38. Ibid., 12 July 1902.
39. Nelson Socialist Journal, January 1907. This was the organ of the SDF and was published to compete with the Nelson Workers' Guide.
40. Nelson Leader, 15 June 1906.

41. Ibid., 14 September 1906.
42. Ibid., 21 September 1906.
43. Ibid., 11 January 1907.
44. Nelson Socialist Journal, January 1907.
45. Nelson Leader, 15 February 1907.
46. Ibid., 24 May 1907.
47. Ibid., 18 January 1907.
48. Ibid., 6 September 1907.
49. Ibid., 31 May 1907.
50. The SDF's membership in Nelson rose from 80 in February 1907 to 150 paying members in September, with an additional 70 in the women's section. However, its declining influence electorally can be seen by contrasting the results in 1902 and 1907 in the Bradley Ward.

1902 - Haytock (Liberal) 368, Pickover (SDF) 360.
1907 - Wilkinson (Liberal) 402, Tempest (SDF) 167.

For other election results see Appendix B.
51. Hill, 'Working-class Politics in Lancashire', p.325.
52. See Chapter IX.
53. Hornby (Unionist) 10,291 ; Snowden (Labour) 10,282;
Drage (Unionist) 8,932; Hamer (Liberal) 8,892.
54. Blackburn Weekly Telegraph, 3 June 1901, a statement Hurley repeated in the Blackburn Times, 12 February 1910
55. Blackburn Weekly Telegraph, 26 May 1906.
56. See Chapter IX.

57. S. G. Hobson, Pilgrim to the Left, (1938), p.111.
58. Coneys, op.cit., p.86.
59. Hobson, op.cit., p.69.
60. SDF Annual Conference Report, 1905.
61. Rochdale Observer, 3 December 1904.
62. Ibid., 4 October 1905.
63. Rochdale Citizen, February 1906.
64. Hobson, op.cit., p.113.
65. Justice, 28 March 1908.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid., 4 April 1908.
68. Ibid., 11 April 1908.
69. Northern Daily Telegraph, 6 December 1909, quoted in
P. F. Clarke, Lancashire and the New Liberalism, (1971),
p.337.
70. Dewsbury Reporter, 15 July 1911.
71. Ibid.
72. Justice, 6 March 1909.
73. Ibid., 7 May 1904.
74. Liberal 5,288; Tory 4,964; Hyndman 4,932.
75. Nine candidates if Will Thorne is included.
76. Only in West Bradford, where Fred Jowett was the
candidate, did Labour win a three-cornered contest.
77. He was subsequently re-elected to the Executive at
the 1906 Conference.
78. Justice, 1 January 1910.

79. There were seven candidates supported financially by the SDF. In addition Dan Irving contested Rochdale, supported by local funds only, and Thorne was re-elected for South West-Ham as a Labour candidate.
80. Conservative 5,776; Liberal 5,681; Hyndman 4,948.
81. Justice, 2 April 1910.
82. Ibid., 26 November 1910.
83. Ibid., 17 December 1910.
84. Yeo, Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis, p.277.
85. See Chapter XIV.
86. Social-Democrat, October 1907.
87. Hill, 'Working-Class Politics in Lancashire', p.383.
88. In Northampton the SDF polled over 3,000 votes in municipal elections in 1909 yet, as Justice admitted, many of its voters went Liberal in 1910 to keep the Tories out. The SDF poll dropped by over 1,000 between the 1906 General Election and January 1910. The Aberdeen branch participated in the Aberdeen Labour Party until 1909 but then, as in Rochdale and Nelson, was forced out because of the local party's decision to affiliate to the national Labour Party. Thomas Kennedy's vote in Aberdeen declined by almost 700 between the two General Elections of 1910.
89. Hill, 'Working-Class Politics in Lancashire', p.329.
90. See Justice, 25 June 1910.
91. See Chapter XIV.

92. Justice, 25 June 1910.
93. Ibid.
94. See Chapter X.
95. Dewsbury Reporter, 22 February 1902. See also 25 October 1902.
96. Justice, 13 September 1902.
97. Ibid.
98. Interview with Leonard Anderson, 22 February 1982.
99. See Chapter X.
100. See, for example, Dewsbury, Batley and District Social-Democrat, February and March 1907. Edward Hartley, a regular visitor to Dewsbury, was a Clarion Vanner. The Dewsbury District News described one such visit, and the van itself, in great detail on 16 August 1902.
101. Dewsbury Reporter, 8 November 1902. The result was F. Newsome 486, R. Machell 463, H. Wood 201.
102. Ibid., 28 March 1903.
103. G. Thorpe 544, H. Wood 191.
104. Dewsbury Reporter, 28 March 1903.
105. Ibid.
106. Myers to Keir Hardie, 17 May 1903, ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 03/98.
107. See Myers to Keir Hardie, ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 03/98/180/182; Dewsbury Reporter, 25 April and 23 May 1903.
108. Dewsbury Reporter, 23 May 1903.
109. Ibid., 1 August 1903.

110. Ibid., 18 June 1904.
111. Justice, 15 August and 5 September 1903.
112. In the event the Liberal did not withdraw at Southampton and Quelch polled 2,146 votes as against 7,032 and 6,255 for the two Liberals and 5,754 and 5,535 for the two Conservatives.
113. Dewsbury Reporter, 7 November 1903.
114. Ibid., 12 May 1906.
115. Justice, 3 June 1905.
116. Ibid., 16 September 1905.
117. Dewsbury Reporter, 27 October 1906.
118. Ibid., 22 November 1902.
119. Its second issue was re-named the Dewsbury, Batley and District Social-Democrat.
120. Ibid., July 1907.
121. Ibid., April 1907.
122. Callinicos, op.cit., p.111.
123. Dewsbury Reporter, 28 March 1908.
124. Ibid.
125. Justice, 26 December 1908.
126. See, for example, Hartley's articles in the Dewsbury, Batley and District Social-Democrat, September and October 1907.
127. The branch was reformed in 1906.
128. Dewsbury, Batley and District Social-Democrat, November 1907.
129. Dewsbury Reporter, 28 December 1907.

130. Turner's vote dropped from 2,629 in 1906 to 2,446 in 1908.
131. Dewsbury, Batley and District Social-Democrat, June 1908.
132. Dewsbury Socialist Club Minutes, 26 March 1908;
Dewsbury, Batley and District Social-Democrat, July 1908. The SDF branch estimated that it cost them £100 per annum to operate.
133. Dewsbury Reporter, 24 October 1908.
134. Ibid., 20 February 1909.
135. Dewsbury Socialist Club Minutes, 14 October 1909.
136. Figures calculated on the basis of dues paid.
137. Memo in the ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 08/135(i).
138. The mirror was painted by Johnny South, a fish frier in the open market. Interview with Leonard Anderson, 22 February 1982.
139. Justice, 23 November 1907.
140. Ibid., 17 October 1903.
141. See Chapter XII.
142. Yorkshire Daily Observer, 20 October 1904.
143. See Chapter XII.
144. Yorkshire Daily Observer, 13 November 1905.
145. Justice, 4 March 1905.
146. Forward, 2 February 1907.
147. Justice, 4 December 1909.
148. Ibid.
149. Yorkshire Daily Observer, 13 November 1905.

150. Keir Hardie to R. Cunningham-Graham, 4 January 1906,
ILP Archive, Francis Johnson Collection, 06/6.
151. Yorkshire Daily Observer, 15 January 1906.
152. Ibid., 8 January 1906.
153. Forward, 13 January 1906.
154. Justice, 14 September 1907.
155. Ibid., 11 December 1909.
156. Ibid., 24 June 1911.
157. Ibid., 2 July 1904.
158. Armley and Wortley News, 17 September 1909.
159. Ibid., 28 October 1910.
160. Ibid., 27 August 1909.
161. Ibid., 24 September and 29 October 1909.
162. Leeds Trades Council Minute Book, 1900-1910.
163. Armley and Wortley News, 22 October 1909. See also
D. B. Foster, Life Story of a Christian Socialist
Councillor.
164. Armley and Wortley News, 1 October 1909.
165. Ibid.
166. Ibid., 24 September 1909.
167. Ibid., 29 October 1909.
168. Ibid.
169. Elsbury was the first if one excludes the six members
of the Charlestown branch, near Hebden Bridge, who
were elected to the Blackshaw Parish Council in 1901,
where of course there was no poll.
170. Justice, 10 September 1910.

171. Hill, 'Working-Class Politics in Lancashire', p.245.
172. Yeo, Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis,
p.257.

CHAPTER XIV.
TOWARDS UNITY.

The Quelch candidature at Dewsbury in 1902 had given rise to a certain optimism within the SDF as to the possibilities of Socialist unity. Quelch himself remarked that

The greatest good which will result from the Dewsbury election will be the consolidation of Socialist forces in this country. The expressions of goodwill which have come from I.L.P. branches...show that they are prepared to work with us for uncompromising Social-Democracy, notwithstanding the unaccountable hostility displayed by some of their chiefs.¹

He was, of course, deluding both himself and his readers for the election had intensified the intransigence of the ILP leaders towards the SDF. Keir Hardie dismissed any thoughts of unity in an article shortly before the election.

Given the inclusion of the S.D.F. into the I.L.P. and one of two things would happen; either the entire movement would be reduced to the impotence of the present S.D.F. level or the irresponsible irreconcilables would withdraw and form another party and the present situation would be reproduced.²

The question of fusion was disposed of at the ILP's 1902

Conference by moving the next question and when the Kelmscott Club circularised all Socialist bodies to ascertain whether or not a conference on unity was feasible the ILP News commented caustically that 'What special call this club has received to take upon itself the duty of setting right the Socialist organisations of Britain we cannot imagine.'³ The same issue violently attacked the SDF as a nonentity 'out to revive its own ebbing existence by engrafting itself upon the I.L.P.' and

asking the I.L.P. in the name of Socialist unity to fuse with it and to fuse with it on condition that the I.L.P. give up its name, its policy and its branch freedom, obscures with vain doctrines its teaching of Socialism and abandons its pledge to co-operate with working-class organizations on independent lines.⁴

The Kelmscott circular was not placed before the ILP Conference and an appeal in The Clarion for unity was similarly dismissed. When the Newcastle ILP initiated a referendum of branches on the question of fusion there was a two to one majority against. Undoubtedly, the SDF's departure from the LRC was the prime cause of this hostility.

Such a negative response produced a temporary reaction within SDF ranks. Theodore Rothstein, who had voted for unity in 1902, accused Hardie and the ILP of 'rank opportunism' in

March 1903 and wrote that 'there are no two Socialist parties in England which it is in the interests of the cause desirable to see fused into one, but only one, the S.D.F., which must and shall remain alone.'⁵ The 1903 SDF Conference ignored the question of fusion with the ILP, but it was suggested that the Federation appeal over the heads of the ILP leadership to the rank and file members. This suggestion was deferred but it indicated a trend in SDF thinking which had initially been sparked by the events at Dewsbury and which would grow stronger as the ILP became ever more entangled with the perceived failings of the Labour Party. Meanwhile the ILP Conference of that year defined its policy; it regarded the LRC as 'a practical and sufficient means of Socialist and Labour unity'. This was to remain, in essence, ILP policy in the coming years, and Hardie remarked in the Labour Leader that 'as a live question fusion no longer exists.'⁶ In an interesting letter Max Beer, the London correspondent of Vorwärts and historian of British Socialism, outlined the differences between the two parties and pinpointed the basic problem. Both parties, he concluded, believed 'in their respective sovereignty. And you can't have two sovereign powers in one body politic.'⁷

Between 1904 and 1911 the SDF Conference made an almost ritual re-affirmation of its desire for Socialist unity. In an effort to widen its base the 1904 Conference allowed local Socialist Societies to affiliate to the SDF but to retain

their own name and organization. The Amsterdam resolution of 1904 instructing Socialist parties within each country to amalgamate, and the example of the French parties in doing so, provided a further impetus to SDF efforts. In the localities branches of the two parties often co-operated fruitfully. Nationally, however, the stumbling block remained affiliation to the Labour Party. After the Federation's Carlisle Conference of 1907 Lee wrote to Francis Johnson of the ILP in the following terms; 'we express our desire to witness before another General Election is upon us the amalgamation in one party of all organizations and individuals willing to work on a definite democratic basis for the realization of Socialism.'⁸ Johnson was informed that the SDF had set up a sub-committee to further unity and the ILP was asked to nominate three members to that committee. The reply was predictable, the ILP suggesting affiliation to the Labour Party as a prerequisite for Socialist unity. Similar letters were sent to the NAC of the ILP after the 1909 and 1910 SDF Conferences, but on each occasion the reply was the same, and with SDF conferences voting overwhelmingly against rejoining the Labour Party unity seemed as far distant as ever.

Pious resolutions at annual conferences self-evidently did not further the cause of Socialist unity, and the Coventry Conference of 1911 finally took positive steps. Responding to the growing feeling that the ILP leadership was out of step with the wishes of its members SDF delegates

carried a Rochdale resolution which called on the Executive

to invite the co-operation of other bodies such as the Socialist Representation Committees, the South Eastern Counties and the Essex Socialist Federations, in the issuing of a circular of invitation to be dispatched to every S.D.P.

branch, I.L.P. branch, local Fabian societies, who believe in industrial and political action.⁹

These other bodies were involved to forestall the suggestion 'that the whole business was a move on the part of the S.D.P. to bring itself to the front.'¹⁰ Support was received from a wide range of organizations - local Socialist Representation Committees, Socialist Societies, the Clarion Scouts, the Clarion Cycling Clubs, the Church Socialist League - and a circular was sent out over their names announcing a conference in Manchester at the end of September. Before dealing with the events of 1911, however, we must pause to study the SDF's motives in pursuing its campaign for unity and its reasons for choosing 1911 to make the attempt.

There was undoubtedly a consistent body of support within the SDF for Socialist unity, evidenced by the perpetual resolutions on the subject. A number of reasons present

themselves. In the first instance, to give the members credit, the idea of 'one Socialist party' was undoubtedly an altruistic notion, an ideal to be aimed at. All Socialists had common principles and it seemed wrong that they should be divided, engaged in internicine warfare, when there was a glorious goal to be attained. But more practical reasons lay at the heart of the matter, particularly where the leadership was concerned. The SDF had, quite simply, failed to achieve the hoped for success in the first decade of the twentieth century. It is true that between 1906 and 1910 200 new branches were recorded, yet this disguised the fact that a considerable number fell away in the same period. The average membership between 1900 and 1910 appears to have been in the region of 9,000, far short of the ILP total, and by no means all of these were regular financial contributors.¹¹ Hyndman and the others could see few returns on thirty years of active propaganda and Socialist unity seemed to offer a way out of the impasse.

Inevitably for a party much concerned with ideology, and for a supposedly revolutionary party operating in a non-revolutionary situation, the SDF was plagued by doctrinal disputes. The party had split in 1884 and again in 1903-4. After the expulsion of the 'impossibilists' Hyndman regained much of his earlier ascendancy for, as Rothstein conceded, 'for all his exasperating defects' he was 'by far the ablest man in the movement.'¹² A number of revolutionaries however,

including Rothstein himself, were determined to remain within the Federation and challenge what they saw as Hyndman's over-rigid Marxism, which relied on the destruction of capitalism by inexorable economic processes. Thus, during the period leading up to the second major attempt at Socialist unity, the SDF found itself racked by dissension, and in many ways the disputes were more fundamental than those which had accompanied the earlier splits. These divisions within the SDF merit closer study, partly because they shed light on the eventual enthusiasm for calling a unity conference, and more importantly because they presaged the disputes within the united party which were eventually to cause its downfall. Certain contentious issues have already been mentioned. The domination of the party by Hyndman and the 'old guard' was one. Hyndman's anti-semitism, first denounced by Rothstein as far back as 1898,¹³ remained a festering sore within the Federation, evidenced by complaints from several members, including Joe Fineberg of the Whitechapel and Stepney branch, who wrote to complain of 'the nasty and spiteful references to Jews' in Justice.¹⁴ The relationship of the SDF to both the trade unions and the Labour Party was, as we have seen, a major subject of controversy. There were four issues, however, which tended to overshadow all others.

Belfort Bax was one of the few SDFers who wished to augment Hyndman's narrow economic conception of Socialism with a more philosophical outlook. He felt that Socialism

entailed specific ethical and metaphysical views and was convinced that Socialists must destroy and replace deep-seated attitudes and sentiments which inhibited the growth of Marxism. The emergence of the ILP with its 'popular' Socialism based on traditional religious and moral feelings, and his experience of patriotic feeling during the Boer War, convinced him of the need to develop a new moral consciousness. In this he ran very much counter to the views of Hyndman and others who operated upon much more utilitarian levels of consciousness, seeking to control society in order to secure the 'happiness of all' and viewing human motivation largely in terms of pleasure and pain. Bax developed his arguments in a series of works, Essays in Socialism, The Ethics of Socialism, The Religion of Socialism and others, discussing questions which many SDFers felt were outside their orbit. The clash of opinions was particularly marked over the question of religion. The predominant SDF view was that religion was a strictly private matter for the individual, an issue which had nothing to do with Socialism. They were at pains to stress this point because the question was a potential political liability for the Federation. From its earliest days the SDF had faced charges of being 'actively irreligious'. They seemed, wrote William Clarke, an early Fabian, 'to desire revolution quite as much for the sake of overthrowing ethics and the spiritual side of things as for the sake of improving the material condition of the people.'¹⁵ Many SDF recruits were,

of course, Secularists and made no secret of the fact. According to George Lansbury they really were 'intolerant of anything like Christianity'¹⁶ and he cited that as one reason for his defection. Publically, however, the Federation strove to maintain a 'respectable' face, hence the Dewsbury branch's pronouncement that it welcomed all recruits irrespective of religion.¹⁷ Quelch had been assailed by charges of irreligion during his Dewsbury campaign, Hyndman faced similar accusations at Burnley. Clergymen were often the most active opponents of the SDF in the localities, the Reverend Anstey in Dewsbury being one example. Thus, when Bax urged that religion in the sense of 'public acceptance of a traditional system of dogmatic teaching' must be fought by Socialists, that it could not be a private matter, he was forcefully attacked.¹⁸ Guy Aldred was one of his few open supporters, resigning from the SDF in 1906 in protest at Quelch's attitude to religion in Justice. The case of J. W. Gott demonstrated SDF sensitivity on the subject.

Gott was the organiser of the British Secular League, based in Bradford, and publisher of the Truth Seeker, a penny monthly once described as 'this most obscene and blasphemous paper'.¹⁹ He was also a Socialist, 'and this unusual combination of Secularism and Socialism was...a hallmark of the Bradford movement under Gott's leadership'.²⁰ A large proportion of the Bradford branch of the SDF were in fact members of the British Secular League, although few

of them were as extreme in their views as Gott. He financed his activities from a clothing business, later augmented by the sale of tea, and employed boycotted free thinkers as salesmen. Bert Killip was one of these. As Tommy Jackson recalled,

he would have made a considerable fortune, but nothing could stop him from including in every parcel of clothing he supplied, a batch of "literature". And as Johnnie's taste ran strongly in the direction of the more vulgar and scurrilous types of anti-clerical propaganda, customers were quite often shocked by the literature, though satisfied with the suits.²¹

Whilst such trickery tickled Gott's sense of humour his activities appalled many of the Socialist leaders, who feared that his openly blasphemous articles and pamphlets would reflect on the whole movement. Blatchford denounced him, the Labour Leader refused to advertise his clothing business.

In Dewsbury Ben Turner and other ILPers were appalled by one of his 'abominable pamphlets', burned them publicly and denounced them in the local press, The SDF too was less than amused by this pamphlet, Socialism: Christ the Enemy of the Human Race, which was written as an attack on Snowden's The Christ That Is To Be. When Gott refused to stop selling this pamphlet outside the Federation's Manchester Conference

in 1908 he was expelled from the party. This elicited yelps of protest from Bax²² and a more measured response from the Bradford SDF, which believed

whilst not endorsing the views put forth in the pamphlet, that if it is right for Christians to demonstrate that Socialism and Christianity are one and the same thing the atheists have equal and exactly the same right to express their views on the question of religion.²³

Their protests were ineffectual but few SDF members followed Gott out of the Federation into the Freethought Socialist League, which he founded in an attempt to prevent the capture, as he saw it, of the Socialist movement by Christianity. As Edward Royle has demonstrated, 'the pull of Socialism appears to have been stronger than the distaste for religion',²⁴ and by no means all SDFers agreed with Bax that Marxism was, by definition, incompatible with religion.²⁵ The majority preferred to leave the matter well alone as a means of avoiding controversy. Gott himself was later imprisoned on several occasions for blasphemy, often aided in his free speech fights by SDFers as individuals but never by the Marxists as an organised body.

The question of religion was then regarded as peripheral to the central economic questions of Socialist theory, and this standpoint was also adopted with regards to the 'woman

question'. Women's role in the SDF was a matter of some concern to the members and the suffrage campaigns of the early 1900s opened up considerable divisions within the party. Underlying the SDF's attitude to women was the assumption that they were a reactionary force in society, largely indifferent to and ignorant of Socialism. This was a generalised viewpoint, applicable to women of all classes, an attitude in marked contrast to that adopted towards men. Women were therefore perceived as a problem: 'they do not come into the Socialist movement. In very many instances they hinder men from joining the movement, and keep many, even of those who have joined, from taking the active part they otherwise would.'²⁶ They were seen as the weaklinks in any strike, encouraging their men back to work, and as potential blacklegs themselves by entering the labour market and undercutting the male 'family' wage. Thus the essential concern of the SDF was to educate members' wives, to convert them to the cause, or at least to neutralise their conservative influence. There was little understanding of the practical problems involved in women becoming active Socialists, the average SDFer often accepting that a woman's place was in the home. To draw them into at least passive acceptance of Socialist activity was one of the reasons for branches' emphasis on social activities - the teas, whist drives, dances and such like. Education and social activity were, therefore, the twin themes of the SDF's attitude to women, themes reinforced by a recognition that women were a powerful

influence upon the children. As one female activist remarked, 'we are anxious to draw women into the movement, as they will influence the children, and so we hope to gain future generations.'²⁷ It was no accident that women members often specialised in children's work, Mary Gray in Battersea originating the Socialist Sunday School movement and others, like Mrs. Spinks in Edmonton, very active in expanding it. The demand for state maintenance of pregnant women and mothers was linked by the SDF to its perennial campaign for the state maintenance of children.

Any accurate estimate of the number of SDF women members is impossible. Certainly, as Karen Hunt points out, their membership 'continued throughout to be sufficiently novel to be worthy of comment, which suggests that they constituted only a fraction of the total membership.'²⁸ They rarely played a leading role in the Federation's activities, the Executive never containing more than two women and often none. Prominent women speakers were rare, a sufficient novelty to attract good crowds and collections, therefore in demand. The SDF put up far fewer female candidates for municipal elections than did the ILP, for example. They were, to use Hunt's description, 'auxiliaries', acting as branch secretaries, officiating at social functions, providing entertainment. It was a widespread view, reflecting the extent to which SDFers had failed to liberate themselves from their upbringing, 'that Socialism needed to be

sweetened for women and that their tolerance of the serious business of political meetings was lower than men's, reflecting a more flighty and flippant nature'.²⁹ Little of a practical nature was done, however, and Justice, opening its pages to the idiosyncratic views of Bax and his supporters, was seen by many women members as positively discouraging recruits.

The perception of women as a problem for the SDF persisted, and in 1904 Dora Montefiore announced the formation of a Women's Committee of the SDF whose function was to form Women's Circles. Their aim was 'to organise and educate women in the principles of Social-Democracy with a view to them becoming members of the Social-Democratic Federation.'³⁰ These Women's Circles initially met with a mixed reception. Annie Oldacre thought them 'retrogressive ...silly', pandering to 'exclusive sex interests'.³¹ If women were Socialist, she thought, they should join the SDF. Supporters of the idea argued that there was no intention of segregating women, and that the Circles were intended as a sort of half-way house to Socialism, preparing the women for full membership of the party. This view was generally accepted once the Circles were in operation, but their activities do not seem to have overcome the stereotypes of women's usefulness to the Federation. It is perhaps indicative that at the inaugural gathering women acted as hostesses for the male SDFers, and most reports emanating from the Circles concentrated upon bazaar work and social

activities. The stated educational function was little emphasised and this caused Dora Montefiore to resign from the Women's Committee in March 1905 because

they have decided to start plain and fancy needlework and hold a bazaar and sale of work.

I feel I must resign from the committee as I never on principle associate myself with bazaars; I very much deprecate the loss of time, money and energy which they entail.³²

This educational role was later revitalised but the Women's Circles never numbered more than 22, the large majority of them in London, reflecting the low priority attached to them by the Federation. Its attitude to women was sharply focussed by the debate over female suffrage.

Full adult suffrage had been a central plank in the SDF programme from its inception, but the fight for women's suffrage met a mixed response within the party. The official line was that the campaign of the suffragettes should not be supported by the SDF because it was a diversion from the struggle for full adult suffrage and, more importantly, because the suffragettes were a middle-class organisation, out 'to create another privileged class of voters.'³³ If they gained their demand, wrote Quelch, their votes would be used against the working class. Most members, including the women, supported this line. They agreed with 'Tattler'

and SDF orthodoxy which did

not admit that women are subject as a sex; and therefore there can be no question of their emancipation as a sex. Working-women form part of the working class and their emancipation is bound up with the emancipation of that class... the issue is a class issue and not one of sex.³⁴

The question of Socialism was an economic one and all other issues distracted from that; their solution would be found in the advent of Socialism. This narrow vision ignored the question of how peoples' attitudes would be altered to coincide with the changed economic basis of society, a question which much concerned Belfort Bax, but it was Social-Democratic orthodoxy and would have remained largely unchallenged were it not for the extraordinary views on the subject expressed by Bax himself. In an article for the Social-Democrat he wrote that

for me there seems no logical ground for opposition to the granting of the franchise for women save the recognition of inferiority.... If one acknowledges complete equality in capacity between men and women, the case for the suffrage seems to be, in itself, unanswerable.

Bax then proceeded to list the reasons for regarding women as inferior, in the physical, intellectual and moral spheres.

Furthermore, he argued, women were 'an almost boundlessly privileged section of the community'; they had not the same responsibilities as men, nor were they subject to the same legal restrictions. Therefore, he concluded, 'For those who, like myself, regard the evidence for the inferiority as conclusive, there is no possible alternative to opposition to female suffrage.'³⁵ Bax was well known for his eccentric opinions on this matter - he was forever complaining about the 'noisy feminist section of the party' - but they had previously been dismissed as an aberration on the part of an otherwise excellent Socialist. In the context of the fight for female suffrage, however, they raised a storm of protest. There were those such as Herbert Burrows and A. A. Watts, no supporters of limited suffrage, who argued vigorously that Bax had no right to propound his views in SDF publications, thereby giving them the appearance of SDF sanction. The retort from J. F. Green was that as Bax was writing 'on a matter which is after all political and no necessary part of Socialism as an economic theory' he had a perfect right to express his personal opinions.³⁶ Subsequent correspondence demonstrated considerable support for Bax's views and thereby provoked a reaction from a small, yet articulate section of women, including Dora Montefiore and Edith Swift. Montefiore argued strongly that Socialists should consider women first as human beings and second only as a creature of sex. Moreover, far from being privileged in any way women were in fact doubly discriminated against,

both economically and sexually.³⁷ Votes for women, they said, even on a limited basis, was one more step forward and it was the task of the party to convert the women to Socialist views not to conjecture on the way in which their vote would be used. The argument became very heated, Bax attacking 'the slimy trail of maudlin feminism'³⁸ which he associated with Zelda Kahan and others. The Executive tried to play down the controversy by arguing that 'votes for women' was not the most important question at that time and it urged 'loyal Socialists' not to divert their energies into that campaign; nevertheless the division of opinion remained a real one and would resurface in the new British Socialist Party. A further result of the controversy was to alienate the suffrage movement generally, and this was by no means the wholly middle-class movement depicted by Quelch; it had a strong working-class constituency in Lancashire and the East End of London which regarded the SDF position as far from satisfactory. Selina Cooper in Nelson, for one, parted company with the Federation over the issue.

The issues of religion and women raised wider questions concerning the role of the party. Many members were dissatisfied with what they saw as the SDF's limited, narrow, economically deterministic view of Socialism. Bax's criticisms have been noted and Theodore Rothstein had advocated a far more interventionist policy in opposition to the prevalent 'propagandist' approach at the time of the Boer War. Yet

the emphasis on the political role of the party and the official dismissal of strikes and industrial struggle as diversions from, if not actively damaging to, the working-class cause remained largely unchallenged. The great industrial upsurge of the early twentieth century introduced new ideas into the Labour movement. Two areas of influence were the gospel of Industrial Unionism, imported from America by the SLP, and syndicalist ideas brought from France by Guy Bowman, at one time manager of the Twentieth Century Press, and Tom Mann. Both of these doctrines emphasised the primacy of industrial as opposed to political organisation and both appealed to direct action, to the general strike, as a means of overthrowing the capitalist system. Such ideas gained ground for a number of reasons. The performance of the Labour Party in Parliament had led to increasing disillusionment with parliamentary activity; the use of the courts against the trade unions in the Taff Vale and Osborne judgements, and the inability of the Labour Party to counter this effectively, added to anti-parliamentary feeling. A massive increase in unemployment, matched by a real drop in living standards, increased discontent and trade union membership rose correspondingly. When, in 1910, the first of the major strikes occurred, to be followed by wave upon wave of action, both official and unofficial, the opportunities for the revolutionary movement seemed immense. As one historian has commented, 'A wild, elemental, pent-up force seemed suddenly

let loose, disregarding precedents and agreements, impatient of compromise, shaking the old complacent trade unionism by the ears.'³⁹ The SDF remained seemingly impervious to such developments. Its publications seized the opportunity provided by the greatest mass struggles in sixty years merely to deliver homilies on the class position of the working class. Hyndman could still ask 'Can anything be imagined more foolish, more harmful, more, in the widest sense of the word, unsocial, than a strike?'⁴⁰ Our primary aim, said Harry Quelch, 'is to organise a political party, independent, class-conscious, proletarian, and Social-Democratic. The function of industrial organisation lies with the trade unions.'⁴¹ Hyndman and Quelch, after their early illusions of an imminent revolution, had invariably hoped for a peaceful transition to Socialism, an orderly change of society. The advocates of direct action, whether syndicalist or suffragette, found little sympathy amongst the SDF leaders, yet they once again found themselves stranded between gradualism and cataclysm, their middle path leaving them unable to respond effectively to unfolding events. Members of the SDF closely involved with the industrial movement could not accept such a line. Many were disillusioned by the Federation's electoral defeats of early 1910 and sought both explanations for the SDF's lack of progress and alternative routes to Socialism. The strike wave revitalised hopes of a radically different social order. 'It invested the daily work of the trade unions with...a purpose that

made it worthwhile.'⁴² Moreover, the doctrines of syndicalism and industrial unionism blurred organisational lines, appealing to dissidents in both the SDF and the ILP and providing a powerful impetus to unity. Whilst the strike wave only erupted some twelve months before the Unity Conference of 1911, opposition was already gaining strength within the SDF and Tom Mann, who had rejoined the Federation on his return from Australia, resigned his membership. His reasons portended future developments:

the real reason why the trade union movement of this country is in such a deplorable state of inefficiency is to be found in the fictitious importance which the workers have been encouraged to attach to Parliamentary action....So I declare in favour of direct industrial organisation; not as a means but as THE means whereby the workers can ultimately overthrow the capitalist system....I am of opinion that the workers' fight must be carried out on the industrial plane, free from entanglements with the plutocratic enemy.⁴³

These three areas of division, religion, the suffrage and the role of the party, acrimonious though they were, paled into insignificance beside the final major area of contention, that of international relations and foreign policy. Hyndman

had often been accused of 'jingosim', a charge he angrily refuted, but in the years before 1911 he and other members of the Executive were continually in print warning of the German threat to Britain and demanding the build-up of the British navy to meet the danger. They were met by a barrage of criticism, and a furious debate ensued which threatened to split the party.

Hyndman and his followers were against what they called 'undifferentiated internationalism', which they saw as a pious ideal. A manifesto on Social-Democracy and Foreign Policy, issued in 1905, argued that 'We are all a bit Nationalists at bottom', and Hyndman had always championed nationalism - not only that of Britain but of other countries - wherever it asserted itself against foreign domination. As he was always proud to point out, his views on this question had never altered since the publication of England For All, and neither had his advocacy of a strong navy, which he regarded as essential for Britain's defence. He had no time for the anti-patriotism of Bax or for what he saw as the ultra-pacifism of the ILP. Initially supportive of the Socialist International as an effective counter to reaction, he came to distrust it as an instrument of the German Social-Democrats, and felt that it would be totally ineffective in view of the fact that Socialists controlled no governments and therefore had no say in international affairs. Whereas Marxists saw the increasing tension of the early twentieth century as a

clash between competing capitalisms which could only be prevented by the solidarity of the international working-class, Hyndman contrasted democracy and despotism and argued that a defensive war or even a preventive war in the interests of democracy was justifiable. To Quelch pious resolutions urging the solidarity of the international working class were 'about as practical as the beating of tom-toms to scare away an eclipse'. Whilst war was inherent in a capitalist system, and the prime objective of Socialists should be to combat one's own government, 'it is quite possible for one to be, by virtue of the circumstances, forced into the position of championing national and democratic rights against imperialist aggression.'⁴⁴ These circumstances had arisen with the increasingly aggressive policy of Germany, seen as embarking upon a 'Teutonic world mission' with the conquest of England the ultimate goal. The pages of Justice between 1904 and 1909 resounded with attacks upon 'the jack-boot bullying of Berlin',⁴⁵ and urged two measures to deter German aggression. The first of these was accepted by most Social-Democrats and was summed up in the phrase 'the armed nation' or 'the citizen army', which had been endorsed by the Second International. As opposed to a professional or conscript army, both of which were instruments of the capitalist state, all citizens should be trained in the use of weapons under civil law. This would guarantee national defence but also assure individual liberty and prevent a counter-reaction by the forces of the state at the time of a

Socialist transformation of society. Quelch published a pamphlet expressing these views in 1904, entitled Social-Democracy and the Armed Nation. When this pamphlet was used by Liberal supporters of Haldane's army reforms in 1907 to justify conscription, which the SDF vehemently opposed, Will Thorne introduced a Citizen Army Bill to the Commons to clarify and explain SDF policy. The Bill's main provisions were that every male aged 18-29 would have annual military training and then pass into the reserves; the citizen army would elect its officers and exercise full democratic control over them; it could only be mobilised to face the threat of invasion. The city or borough council of each district would administer the Act.⁴⁶ Thorne's Bill was ridiculed by the ILP, and received no support from his Labour colleagues, but it expressed Social-Democratic orthodoxy. The second measure, however, the call for an enlarged navy, provoked an outcry.

Few SDFers were outright pacifists and even fewer supported Belfort Bax in his forthright statement of Socialist internationalism. He placed principles before patriotism, affinity with fellow Socialists before national solidarity, and wished success to his country's enemies. War, said Bax, was a capitalist conflict of supreme indifference to Socialists and he attacked those who 'return to their patriotic "vomit" like the scriptural dog.'⁴⁷ Most Federation members were more cautious in their approach, but they condemned Hyndman's anti-German agitation. Leading

spokesmen for the opposition were J. B. Askew, Theodore Rothstein, Zelda Kahan and E. C. Fairchild. The main thrust of their argument was that Hyndman was betraying the principles of Socialism, that in denouncing Germany he was encouraging jingoism in his own country, that he was colluding with the British government in deluding the people as to the true facts of the situation. Rothstein accused Hyndman of 'Teutonophobia', of being blind to the fact of English naval supremacy which had always been used to block German access to the world's markets:

we find you joining your voice in the war chorus of the Imperialists, and calling upon the people to...forget the class antagonisms...in a common effort to stave off the "national" peril. If that is Social-Democracy I for one refuse to accept it.⁴⁹

His critics questioned Hyndman's right to lead the SDF, wondering whether or not he had 'mistaken the church' to whose doors he had nailed his opinions. They argued for a campaign to open the eyes of the masses. 'Our duty as Socialists is to combat the warlike tendencies and appetites in our own country.'⁵⁰ What particularly angered them was Hyndman's public pronouncements on the question, which, they argued, would be equated with official SDF policy. 'A greater shame has never befallen a Socialist party',⁵¹ said Rothstein.

Criticism of Hyndman reached a crescendo in 1909, culminating in a resolution from the Central Hackney branch, of which Rothstein, Kahan and Fairchild were all members, urging the SDF Executive to dissociate the party from his statements. The Executive was obviously taken aback by the torrent of disapproval, and moderated its line. A Justice editorial now urged political pressure on the Government to pursue peace, which led Kahan to congratulate the Executive, and at the end of the year the paper vigorously attacked Blatchford's anti-German articles in the Daily Mail, accusing him of being a tool of the Tory press. 'We are for pouring water, not oil, on the flames of international suspicion, jealousy and ill-will which are unquestionably being fanned alike by German jingoes and the foolishly provocative attitude of the British Government.'⁵² The controversy died down until Hyndman, rarely responsive to criticism, reopened the wounds with a letter in the Morning Post on 6 July 1910. Emblazoned with the title 'Social-Democrats and a big navy', his letter attacked the Labour party's 'turn-the-cheek-to-the-smiter pacifism'. 'A sham defence is worse than no defence at all', he argued, and he felt that if England wasn't going to maintain an effective navy she might as well scrap it altogether. The navy was vital for the maintenance of her food supplies, said Hyndman, a defensive necessity for England but a luxury for Germany. An outraged response

ensued. Askew derided Hyndman as a 'good English class-conscious bourgeois';⁵³ Kahan denounced him for 'outstepping the limit of all reasonable licence in free speech'.⁵⁴ His arguments were ridiculed. He had portrayed the navy as a defender of the right of asylum, a champion of national liberty. What about India? What about South Africa? was the chorus. Careful not to epitomise the 'peace at any price' brigade so scorned by Hyndman, his opponents produced reasoned arguments to rebut him and accepted the need for a navy, but only strong enough to deter an attack by making it an unacceptable risk. Meanwhile they questioned the logic of his rationale for German designs on England.⁵⁵ The lines were clearly drawn, Hyndman, Quelch and their supporters talking of 'the balance of criminality' and the inability of Socialists to prevent war, their opponents urging the Socialists of each country to oppose the militarism of their own government. Once again the Central Hackney branch took the lead, calling on the Executive

publicly to dissociate the S.D.P. from the anti-German policy of comrade Hyndman and from his demands for further expenditure on the Navy... to call upon Hyndman to desist from these utterances, both in Justice and particularly the Capitalist press, since his views on the subject are contrary to the spirit and policy of the S.D.P.⁵⁶

As the two sides moved further apart the tone became embittered.

Hyndman objecting to the 'abuse', 'caucus votes' and 'sentimental resolutions' directed against him. The opposition came to a head at the 1911 Easter Conference. Kahan spoke to a resolution calling upon the SDF

to combat with their utmost energy the demands for additional armaments....Never had the S.D.P. made a bigger and more terrible mistake than in identifying the Party with the jingo warmonger - they had placed themselves outside the international movement.⁵⁷

Quelch moved an Executive amendment which said that war was the result of capitalism and therefore a vigorous campaign against capitalism was the best way of preventing war. Meanwhile 'an adequate navy for national defence' was essential. The vote which followed the debate was turned into a vote of confidence in the Executive and consequently the dissidents were narrowly defeated. The Hyndmanites were now satisfied that their position was secure; they felt that the vote demonstrated that the divisions within the party had been exaggerated and that it vindicated their stance:

By the decision of the Conference...the party, while pledged to work for international arbitration and a limitation of armaments, is not committed to a futile bogus and bourgeois

agitation against armaments which only results in defeating its own aims; and, on the other hand, it is pledged to oppose any expansion of armaments, any militarist or naval schemes which are not absolutely essential for the national defence, or which are designed for imperialist aggression or capitalist expansion.⁵⁸

The position was defined and the air cleared, thought the Executive, but they had misjudged the scale of the opposition. Although Herbert Burrows and J. F. Green resigned, protesting at these 'extraordinary doctrines for professed Marxists to hold', Kahan and others decided to stay and fight. The campaign centred around the fact that the Executive amendment had never been submitted to the branches, only being introduced on the morning of the Conference, and that the debate had been manipulated to allow Hyndman and Quelch the maximum amount of time to attack their opponents. Criticism was so great that it was eventually agreed that the so-called 'Hackney resolution' should be put to the branches. Although the Hyndmanites controlled Justice and had the support of the powerful Lancashire District Council, the plebiscite resulted in a victory for Kahan and her supporters by 79-60 and administered a definite rebuff to the Executive.

Such controversies within the SDF had important consequences for Socialist unity. The leadership, finding itself challenged in several areas, hoped to use the unity

campaign as a diversion from the party's internal problems, as a unifying force. It was motivated too by the electoral disasters of 1910, and by a financial crisis which at one time threatened the continued publication of Justice.

The dissidents, however, encouraged by their success on the armaments resolution, hoped to gain new strength from the Unity Conference and mount a further challenge to the Hyndmanites.

There were also external reasons for the SDF to move towards Socialist unity in 1911. Dismay at the Labour Party's performance in Parliament had produced a spirit of revolt within the ILP and among Socialists generally. One ILPer accused the party of losing 'its political and Socialist identity in a frantic effort to gloat over superficial successes.'⁶⁰ Others, the Huddersfield ILP being a particular example, objected to the increasingly oligarchic control of the party by the NAC. According to H. Russell Smart, the ILP was now 'a mere machine for registering the decrees of three or four able men.'⁶¹ As the pressure of its political role increased members began to choose, consciously, between the ultimate Socialist vision and the trade union alliance. This impulse found expression with, and was stimulated by, the election of Victor Grayson, a captivating speaker, to Parliament for the Colne Valley constituency on a straight Socialist ticket. His unwillingness to compromise soon made him a popular figure with the SDF. Grayson refused to abide by Parliamentary rules, and was suspended from the House in

November 1908, leaving it with the words, 'I leave this House with pleasure...it is a House of murderers.'⁶² He wrote briefly for Orage's New Age and in early February 1909 became political editor of The Clarion, where he campaigned for a more Socialist policy from the Labour Party. With the assistance of Sam Hobson he initiated the formation of Socialist Representation Committees, alliances of Socialists in the localities with the purpose of promoting parliamentary candidates. Grayson was in demand everywhere. He was, as Walter Kendall has noted, 'a personal embodiment of mass dissatisfaction with the policy of the Labour Party leaders.'⁶³ He was also symptomatic of a malaise within the ILP. Between 1909 and 1911 46 branches collapsed and dues were reduced by £200. Dissidents campaigned to return the ILP to Socialist principles; they drew closer to the SDF, sharing its platforms and co-operating in the three by-election campaigns of 1908. At the 1909 Conference of the ILP there was a consistent vote of one-third or more against official policy and a majority referred back a paragraph censuring Grayson. Eventually MacDonald, Hardie, Snowden and Glasier resigned from the NAC, a desperate measure to restore their authority and win approval for the party's policy. The revolt went a stage further in 1910 when four members of the NAC signed the so-called 'Green Manifesto', Let Us Reform the Labour Party, accusing the leadership of a 'suicidal revisionist policy... bartering the soul of a great cause for the off chance of an

occasional bare bone.' The manifesto argued that the party should vote in Parliament on each question's merits and not on the basis of support for the Liberals. This revolt was effective to a degree. Both Hardie and Glasier retained their earlier Socialist vision and sympathised with the rebels, Glasier re-emphasising the work of Morris and Hardie, interestingly, quoting Marx in defence of the ILP's tactics.⁶³ The reins of leadership during this crisis fell, however, to MacDonald who ensured 'the triumph of politics over ideology.'⁶⁵ He outmanoeuvred the dissidents and not one was re-elected to the NAC. Dissatisfied ILPers would have to look elsewhere!

The SDF was undoubtedly influenced by this crisis in the ILP.⁶⁶ Such rank and file disaffection seemed to offer a golden opportunity to attract support for the idea of Socialist unity. When the dissidents were defeated at the ILP Conference in 1911 the time seemed ripe to make the attempt. Other trends also offered hope. As Tsuzuki has noted, 'The growth of local Socialist societies, independent of the SDF and ILP, and often under the influence of Blatchford's Clarion, was a feature of the first decade of the twentieth century.'⁶⁷ Apparently those much-maligned 'unattached Socialists' were at last bestirring themselves. In London a Provisional Committee for the Promotion of Common Action among Socialists was formed by members of the SDF, ILP, and Clarion groups. The formation of a United Socialist Propaganda League in 1911, to spread the word in

rural areas, seemed to confirm this development. Add to this the growing industrial ferment and it is little wonder that the SDF should choose 1911 to revive its campaign for unity. The refusal of the ILP and Fabian Executives to attend a unity conference did nothing to dampen the SDF's enthusiasm. This had been foreseen and it was fully expected that individual branches of these organisations would come over in large numbers. And then, just as the campaign for Socialist unity gathered momentum, came the bombshell! Victor Grayson, by now freed from his duties as an M.P., launched his own appeal in The Clarion for the formation of the British Socialist Party.⁶⁸

NOTES.

1. Justice, 1 February 1902.
2. Dewsbury Reporter, 18 January 1902.
3. ILP News, April 1902.
4. Ibid.
5. Justice, 7 March 1903.
6. Labour Leader, 18 April 1903.
7. Justice, 21 March 1903.
8. H. W. Lee, The Social-Democratic Party and Socialist Unity, p.14.
9. Justice, 29 July 1911.
10. Ibid.
11. See Walter Kendall, The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921, p.311.
12. Rothstein to Kautsky, 18 May 1909, quoted in S. Pierson, British Socialists, p.253.
13. Justice, 9 July 1898.
14. Ibid, 12 August 1911.
15. W. Clarke to T. Davidson, 13 January 1884, quoted in J. & J. Mackenzie, op.cit., p.43.
16. G. Lansbury to K. Hardie, n.d., ILP Archive/Francis Johnson Collection, 05/90.
17. See Chapter XIII.
18. See, for example, A. A. Watts in Justice, 21 January 1905.
19. Rev. D. W. Weir of Manchester, quoted in Royle, op.cit., p.278.

20. Royle, op.cit., p.63.
21. T. A. Jackson, Solo Trumpet, p.91.
22. Justice, 22 August 1908.
23. Ibid., 8 August 1908.
24. Royle, op.cit., p.241.
25. See, for example, a letter to the Dewsbury Reporter, 23 October 1909. Gott's activities in the Dewsbury area led to a heated exchange of letters in the local press, contributors including Malfew Seklew, an ex-SDFer, who now regarded the Federation as 'progressive mugwumps', and David Nicholl the anarchist. The activities of the Freethought Socialist League are detailed in T. A. Jackson, Solo Trumpet, Chapter 4, and in Royle, op.cit., pp.279-282.
26. Justice, 9 September 1893.
27. Ibid., 23 April 1904.
28. K. Hunt, 'Women and the Social Democratic Federation: Some Notes on Lancashire', North West Labour History Society, Bulletin 7, 1980-81, p.54.
29. Ibid., p.57.
30. Justice, 27 April 1907.
31. Ibid., 16 April 1904.
32. Ibid., 11 March 1905.
33. Social-Democrat, July 1910.
34. Justice, 25 June 1904.
35. Social-Democrat, March 1909. See also a similar article in Justice, 9 April 1910.

36. Justice, 11 January 1908.
37. Social-Democrat, April 1909.
38. Justice, 19 March 1910.
39. Kendall, op.cit., p.26.
40. H. M. Hyndman, Further Reminiscences, p.427.
41. Social-Democrat, April 1910.
42. J. T. Murphy, New Horizons, p.142.
43. Justice, 13 May 1911.
44. Ibid., 29 August 1908.
45. Ibid., 12 August 1905.
46. See The National Citizen Force Bill, An Appreciation and Explanation, an SDF pamphlet published in 1908.
47. Justice, 1 April, 14 April 1906.
48. Ibid., 3 April 1909.
49. Ibid., 10 April 1909.
50. Ibid., 14 September 1907.
51. Ibid., 22 May 1909.
52. Ibid., 25 December 1909.
53. Ibid., 6 August 1910.
54. Ibid., 20 August 1910.
55. See, for example, A. A. Watts in Justice, 23 July 1910,
J. B. Askew, Justice, 6 August 1910.
56. Ibid., 30 July 1910.
57. Ibid., 22 April 1911.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 29 April 1911.

60. Labour Leader, 15 July 1904.
61. Huddersfield Worker, 2 May 1908.
62. Hansard, 22 November 1908, quoted in Kendall, op.cit., p.36.
63. Kendall, op.cit., p.36.
64. See Pierson, British Socialists, p.167.
65. Ibid., p.178.
66. See Theodore Rothstein in the Social-Democrat August 1909, and Quelch in the issue of March 1910.
67. Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, p.167.
68. Clarion, 4 August 1911.

CHAPTER XV.

A CALL TO ARMS! - THE BRITISH SOCIALIST PARTY.

Victor Grayson's significance as a focus for criticism of the ILP's policy was revealed at that party's 1909 Conference. Although critics of the Labour alliance were soundly defeated on a number of key votes, Grayson was successful in referring back a section of the NAC's report which justified their action in refusing to book him for meetings. MacDonald, Hardie, Glasier and Snowden thereupon resigned from the NAC, accusing Grayson of attempting to subvert the ILP. Grayson, for his part, felt that the resignations were stage-managed in an attempt to rally support to the leadership. Whatever the truth of the matter, the Conference had revealed serious dissatisfaction with official policy. Opinion on the left of the party seemed to be hardening in favour of Socialist unity, a fact emphasised by Grayson himself when he co-authored The Problem of Parliament with G. R. S. Taylor and expressly dedicated it to the formation of a Socialist party. He felt, with Hyndman and Quelch, that the rank and file of the ILP and SDF had much in common, and when Grayson joined the staff of the Clarion in February 1909 he used the paper to agitate for a united Socialist party built out of the ranks of the ILP, SDF, and Clarion organisations. As a staging post to unity he advocated the formation of Socialist electoral federations, or Socialist Representation Committees.

The first steps were taken in Manchester, understandably

so, for it was there that Grayson had first risen to prominence as a Socialist propagandist, and he retained links with Socialists of all parties in the city. Manchester was 'favourable terrain' for such an initiative, having a strong tradition of SDF/ILP co-operation and its ILP branches a reputation for independence of thought and action.¹ The initiative was taken by George Simpson, secretary of the Clarion Cycling Club and manager of the Manchester Clarion Cafe, who circulated 86 branches of various organisations towards the end of 1909. Subsequently, representatives of 21 Socialist societies attended an inaugural meeting in February 1910, although only 11 societies representing 800 members had joined by mid-May. Still, a momentum had been established and Grayson, after his defeat at Colne Valley in January 1910, issued a unity appeal which backed the Manchester SRC.

There are thousands of unattached Socialists that must be yearning for a party that knows its mind and has courage and culture to express it. There are branches that are chafing against the tightly held rein. Let them come together under a common banner and rejuvenate our good cause.²

In June of that year the 'Provisional Committee for the promotion of common ground among Socialists' issued its first circular, supporting the formation of SRCs. Although the Committee included the SDFers E. C. Fairchild and

Albert Purcell, the SDF executive was suspicious of these new developments, seeing them as a further dilution of Socialism and a threat to the Federation's national organisation. Quelch attacked SRCs as 'imitations of the Labour Party' and argued that 'where people are so closely agreed so loose a form of combination is not sufficient.'³ The Manchester SDF clearly took his point, for at a meeting of the SRC in September they urged that 'Unity can best be achieved by affiliation to a Socialist organisation - the S.D.F.'⁴ This certainly did not fit the ILP branches' view of future organisation, and Simpson and Grayson were already suggesting the formation of a completely new party as a means of bringing together Socialists of all persuasions.

Throughout 1911 the Grayson campaign intensified. SRCs were formed at Birmingham and Liverpool, SDF and ILP branches amalgamated to form Socialist societies at Oldham, Bury and Ashton. Leonard Hall, disillusioned by the failure of his attempt to democratise the ILP, joined the Birmingham SRC and later in the year H. Russell Smart also defected. The adherence of such prominent ILPers and the wave of industrial militancy in 1911 gave the idea of Socialist unity the appearance of inevitability. Thus Grayson announced, in August 1911, that 'The psychological moment has at last arrived....The time for the formation of "THE BRITISH SOCIALIST PARTY" has definitely come!....If we miss this moment we have missed the opportunity of a century.'⁵ Grayson shared with the SDF a belief that the year of 1911

was to be a momentous one for British Socialism, but the two campaigns bore a number of significant differences. There is no direct evidence to suggest that Grayson's campaign was initiated in opposition to that of the SDF, but a number of incidents prior to the Unity Conference, which was called for Manchester on the weekend of 30 September-1 October, demonstrated the tension that lay beneath the surface. Whereas the SDF wished already organized groupings to send delegates to the Conference, there to discuss the grounds for amalgamation, Grayson appealed to individuals to send in their names for the formation of a completely new party. A mere expansion of already existing parties was not what was needed, he argued. 'For our new wine we must have new bottles.'⁶ This was not at all agreeable to the SDF. As Justice proclaimed shortly afterwards:

we cannot regard with any favour any attempt to form a new Socialist Party independent of existing organisations. Such an attempt...cannot but increase the number of rival organizations, and add to the present lamentable divisions, instead of uniting the Socialist organizations which already exist and eliminating those divisions.⁷

Yet, Grayson's fledgling body appeared to have every chance of success. Within a week of his appeal he was writing that 'The British Socialist Party is practically an accomp-

lished fact...the response has been really extraordinary.'⁸ Letters had flooded into The Clarion, embryo branches were already in existence, Clarion Cycling Clubs and Socialist Churches had agreed to enter the new party. Hundreds of ILPers, said Grayson, had written welcoming the BSP. One must beware of taking his claims too seriously at this stage. Individual ILPers were enthusiastic but ILP strongholds remained sceptical. The editor of The Worker, the paper of the Huddersfield ILP, remarked of the BSP that it was 'an odd way of furthering unity, to promote disunity,'⁹ when there were already plenty of parties to join. Nonetheless Grayson's appeal had clearly touched a chord, and worried SDF leaders warned their members not to fill in the Clarion forms but to wait until the Manchester Unity Conference. Grayson made his view of the SDF's manoeuvres explicitly clear. He accused the Federation of having lost its enthusiasm and efficiency, and stated categorically that it was the condition of the SDF as much as anything else which rendered the formation of the British Socialist Party essential. Their steps to unity, he wrote, 'will amount to little more than an enlargement of the S.D.P.'¹⁰ Differences of outlook appeared very early too. Robert Blatchford appealed to his readers at the start of the campaign not to confound the principles of Socialism with other principles but to let each man be free to express his views on all points outside the mere plain principles of Socialism. The British Socialist Party was to be a wide,

all-embracing party, having 'a natural sympathy with those who are organizing the workers on the basis of toil instead of craft, for direct action in the industrial field as well as for political action on elected bodies.'¹¹ Leonard Hall also expressed the view that 'The people's real hope and strength lie for the present in the industrial field.'¹² This emphasis on direct action clearly ran counter to the SDF's traditional political orthodoxy and suggested problems ahead.

Yet the new BSP had made spectacular progress even before the Conference. Branches in Birmingham and Sheffield reported 300 and 100 members respectively; the United Socialist Propaganda League had come over; a hugely successful meeting had been held at St. George's Hall, Bradford, in the heart of ILP territory. Grayson's appeal had spread far and wide, encompassing all except the 'impossibilists' of the SLP and the SPGB, whom he regarded as a probable 'immediate source of division.'¹³ The British Socialist movement appeared set for a renaissance. And when Grayson, on the weekend of the Conference itself, wrote in very conciliatory terms that he had misunderstood the intentions of the SDF and that their plan now harmonised 'absolutely with our own project,'¹⁴ a union of Socialists outside the Labour Party seemed a realisable goal. The events at the Unity Conference itself reinforced this optimism. A genuine atmosphere of unity and comradeship pervaded the proceedings, overriding any differences of opinion as to policy. Thus Hyndman, closing the

Conference, declared that

It was a subject of rejoicing that they were now sending from Manchester a message to the Socialists of the world that at last a step had been taken in the constitution of a really organized and united Socialist Party in this country.¹⁵

There was a general feeling of euphoria in the air, summed up by Grayson a week later when he wrote that the Conference 'was the most harmonious and unanimous Conference of its kind that has ever been held.'¹⁶ Certainly, attendance at the Conference was impressive. Delegates claimed to represent 41 ILP branches, 32 Clarion organisations, 85 SDF branches, 50 local Socialist Societies and 12 branches of the new BSP, totalling some 35,000 members in all. A further 46 organisations, including 18 ILP branches, had sent messages of support. The title of 'British Socialist Party' had been adopted overwhelmingly, and a provisional committee appointed to draw up a constitution. Debates had been fraternal and any suggestion of SDF predominance seemed unfounded, for six of the ten Provisional Executive members were from outside the Federation.¹⁷ When Grayson wrote that the SDF had 'made a stupendous and generous sacrifice in the interests of Socialist Unity' any lingering doubts as to the homogeneity of the new party should have

been dispelled. How successful then had been the appeal to the rank and file of the ILP? How accurate were the membership figures so proudly announced after the Conference? Was the BSP truly an expression of Socialist faith encompassing all sections of the Movement or was it, as most historians of Socialism would claim, simply the SDF under another name? To what extent were the various groupings united on policy?

The debates around the basis of union had been friendly but they had demonstrated a number of differing tendencies. Harry Quelch moved the resolution on the subject of union in the following terms:

The Socialist Party is the political expression of the working class movement, acting in the closest co-operation for the socialisation of the means of production and distribution....Alike in its objects, its ideals, and in the means employed, the Socialist Party, though striving for the realization of immediate social reforms demanded by the working class, is not a reformist but a revolutionary party, which recognizes that social freedom and equality can only be won by fighting the class war through to the finish....¹⁸

Tom Groom, on behalf of the Clarion Clubs, moved an amendment which stated that the acceptance of basic Socialist principles was sufficient ground for membership and asking for the reference to 'class war' to be deleted, on the grounds that it would alienate many potential adherents. This was defeated, but a more lengthy debate arose around a Leonard Hall amendment which proposed a policy for the party of 'working by revolutionary industrial tactics supplemented by political action.' Hall, the ex-ILPer and co-signatory of the 'Green Manifesto', had moved rapidly towards syndicalism as he became disenchanted with the Labour Party's performance in Parliament. The manifesto of the Birmingham section of the BSP, issued before the Unity Conference, was an outright syndicalist document declaring in favour of the general strike as the means of overthrowing capitalism. It also demonstrated Clarion influence in its call for a 'workers' commonwealth' rather than 'state capitalism'. Hall argued strongly at Conference against the parliamentary road to Socialism, which he feared would make the BSP a 'second edition of the so-called Labour Party', and he urged members 'to popularise both the idea and the practical organisation of the sympathetic and general strike'.¹⁹ This was, of course, anathema to SDF orthodoxy, Mann having resigned over the issue, and leading SDFers argued volubly against Hall. He was supported by Alf Barton of Sheffield, an ex-ILPer, and by Grayson and although his amendment was defeated by 92

votes to 62 the debate demonstrated considerable support for his views. Furthermore, Hall and his supporters had one significant success when they attacked the SDF's 'long list of absurd palliatives' and succeeded in deleting such 'reformist' suggestions.

Other areas of division were also evident. Conflicting attitudes to the Labour Party were clearly apparent. Whilst the SDF had always opposed reaffiliation a significant section of its leadership was in the process of reassessing its position. But Grayson and Hall were clearly hostile; Grayson's political stance had hardened since 1907 and he vehemently opposed any approach by the BSP to the Labour Party. Their defection from the ILP was a direct result of its attachment to the Labour alliance and they saw no reason for the BSP to make the same mistake. George Simpson was of like opinion, regarding the alliance as 'one of the greatest barriers to socialism'.²⁰ These three were far more condemnatory of the Labour Party at this time than were the SDF leaders and this issue was one which epitomised the way in which the 'Old Guard' were eventually to be outflanked by a younger and more radical generation of Socialists. There was also disagreement over the question of organisation. Many of the ex-ILPers were strong proponents of internal democracy, totally opposed to centralised control; their dislike of the ILP cabal of Hardie, Glasier, MacDonald and Snowden had been a prime factor in their decision to leave the party. The Clarion element was similarly motivated;

the rationale of the paper's existence had been an aversion to leadership, the need for a rank and file viewpoint. Grayson's unity campaign had also emphasised this strain. Thus the ILP/Clarion wing of the BSP favoured a loose federal structure, as opposed to the SDF, which advocated 'complete amalgamation, complete fusion'.

There were in fact three demonstrable groupings at this initial conference. There were those, including many ex-ILPers, attracted by Grayson and loyal to the cultural impulses of The Clarion, who hoped for an entirely new party, as all-embracing as possible; the SDF, anxious to maintain its own traditions as the nucleus of the new party; and finally Leonard Hall and his followers, increasingly attracted to syndicalism. If the Conference were to achieve its aim then these tendencies would have to exist harmoniously. As Stanley Pierson has noted of the Social-Democratic Federation, 'In their efforts to spread their sails to catch the gusts of disaffection emanating from the ILP and the new winds of syndicalism, the SDP leaders were endangering their historic commitment to political action.'²² Would they demonstrate a greater sensitivity than in the past to currents of thought and action outside their perception, in order to maintain their breakthrough from isolation?

On the surface the BSP progressed smoothly after the Conference and its organizers appeared confident. Those ILP

branches moving over to the new party included Failsworth, Maidstone, Romford, Wakefield, St. Helens, Crewe, Stretford, Balham and Stoke Newington. The Colne Valley Socialist League seceded from the ILP and Conrad Noel, the 'red' vicar of Thaxted, resigned his membership and joined the BSP. Leonard Hall argued that one-third of the ILP had come over to the BSP and Grayson was as definite in his claims: 'if the B.S.P. has not up to the present moment absorbed at least thirty per cent of the Independent Labour Party, our forms are liars and ought to be torn up,'²³ he said. There is little evidence to support the claim that the BSP attracted ILP members in such numbers, and indeed much evidence suggests that initial estimates of membership were exaggerated. As Morris has pointed out, there are no reliable membership figures for bodies represented at the Unity Conference other than the SDF and ILP branches. There was also 'a fair degree of over affiliation...numerous cases of overlap'.²⁴ Delegates attended from SRCs and their affiliated bodies, from Clarion groups and SDF/ILP/BSP branches in the same town. As far as ILP recruitment is concerned precise figures are difficult to estimate. Grayson and Hall's analysis of 30 per cent was flatly denied by the Labour Leader, which put the figure as low as five per cent, presumably for propaganda purposes. Quite clearly temporary incursions into ILP support were made. Membership in the Lancashire division fell by 900 in 1911-12, and the 22 Lancashire branches represented at the Conference was a quarter

of the divisional total. By 1913 Altrincham was the only branch left in its federation, many Cheshire members having followed their NAC member into the BSP. Other groupings, the Colne Valley Socialist League and Openshaw Socialist Society for example, were ex-ILP branches which had already seceded. Yet there were limits to these losses. They were concentrated in South Lancashire, the BSP failing to extend much beyond the SDF branches in the north-east of the county. 'It was also evident that few branches came over in total and that some which attended the Socialist Unity Conference remained in the ILP. The branches shed were generally smaller ones with traditions of disaffection and semi-autonomy'.²⁵ Research into the West Riding of Yorkshire suggests that at the height of its support, in March 1912, the BSP there could claim 2,000 members, Of these 'perhaps between 1,000 and 1,300 ILP members went over...., nearer 20 per cent than the 30 per cent Grayson claimed.'²⁶ Many of these were from the Colne Valley Socialist League, Grayson's heartland. It is obvious therefore that the BSP did appeal to dissident ILPers, but certainly not on the hoped-for scale. Many of the opponents of ILP policy, J. M. McLachlan for example - co-author of the 'Green Manifesto' with Hall and a director of the Manchester Clarion Cafe - did not cross over because they were not convinced that the BSP offered a realistic alternative to the Labour Alliance. The British Socialist Party had first to prove itself.

It had been decided at Conference that the SDF should retain its organisation intact until a new constitution had been ratified by the branches; in other words individual branches were not to join the BSP, the SDF would merge as one body. Grayson agreed to this, and the Provisional Committee went ahead with drafting a constitution. At its first meeting the object of the party was declared to be 'the establishment of the Co-operative Commonwealth - that is to say, the transformation of capitalist competitive society into a Socialist or Communist society'.²⁷ In the immediate term the BSP would support all measures which protected the life and health of the workers. As to its methods, the party would use education, co-operation with the unions, and above all the establishment of an independent Socialist party in Parliament. The response was sufficiently encouraging for H. W. Lee, secretary to the Committee, to report that

The Social-Democratic Party nationally expressed its entire concurrence with the decisions of the Provisional Committee, and 105 other bodies and branches expressed their readiness to agree to the Constitution in order that the B.S.P. might go ahead without further delay.²⁸

The first conference of the BSP was arranged for Easter 1912 in Manchester.

Until this date the organisation had been run from

two centres. David Reid had dealt with The Clarion operation, Lee had looked after affairs for the SDF. With the party now officially established activities were centralised at Chandos Hall, the SDF headquarters, but as Walter Kendall has observed

Grayson quickly realized that he had been outwitted. The SDP had no intention of dissolving into the British Socialist Party before the next year's conference. In the meantime its organization remained in being. By relinquishing the Workshop Street office, and consenting to centralisation under Lee, Grayson had handed over organizational control of the new party to the SDP.²⁹

Although Lee defended this manoeuvre as a means of allowing the SDF 'to wind up its internal affairs', Grayson aired his dissatisfaction publicly early in the New Year. He attacked the SDF for its duplicity and argued that 'no amalgamation should or can take place until the S.D.P. has ceased to exist as a separate organization.'³⁰ Grayson further protested that by transforming the Provisional Committee into the Executive Committee, and by transferring the headquarters to Chandos Hall on an extended lease, the members concerned had taken steps 'for which we had not a scrap of delegated authority'. Both he and Tom Groom insisted that the new party needed to make a fresh start or it was doomed to failure.

Although Grayson vehemently denied any split within the BSP this was his last article in the Clarion, and he gradually reduced his activity. He was absent altogether from the 1912 Conference, and a story he wrote for Justice in May reflected his disillusionment.³¹ For a while his name was still used on propaganda posters, and he lectured around the country, albeit intermittently, but a severe illness in 1913 marked the end of his commitment. It has been suggested that Grayson's departure was 'the end of the prospect of forming a united socialist party' for 'He was perhaps the one figure who could have cut across the antagonism between the ILP and the SDF.'³² It is doubtful whether anyone could have persuaded the ILP leadership to support unity with the SDF outside the Labour Party, but this view, to an extent, overestimates the man. Grayson had indeed attracted some ILPers into the BSP, but in smaller numbers than he had hoped. His main area of support straddled the Yorkshire/Lancashire boundary, and he was by no means as popular in the rest of the country. Even in the Colne Valley constituency which he won in 1907 his erratic behaviour had irritated many of his former supporters and France Littlewood, ex-ILP national treasurer and a stalwart Grayson supporter at that election, denounced his candidature in 1910. His withdrawal from the BSP at such an early stage, at the first rebuff, suggests a lack of moral fibre and his frequent drunken bouts served to emphasize this. The place to challenge the old SDF group was from within the BSP, at Party Conference and on the

Executive, where he was certainly not outnumbered. By failing to do so he gave credence to the notion that his intention had been to form a 'Grayson party' rather than a united Socialist party.³³ His later career, allied with his previous outbursts in Parliament, lead one to suspect a certain instability which rendered Grayson incapable of buckling down to the everyday work of organization. Fred Jowett had justifiably accused him of lacking group loyalty during his ILP days and it does seem that he was very much an individualist. In this he reflected the Clarion philosophy; neither he nor Blatchford was capable of sustained work within an organisation; like the Clarion they worked best as free-lance operators for the movement at large. It would not therefore be correct to assume that the SDF had a preconceived plan to 'capture' the BSP. There is no evidence to suggest that but the somewhat amorphous nature of the non-SDF elements, allied to the organisational incapacity of the Grayson group, made it easy for the Federation 'Old Guard' to assume control. As they had frustrated dissidents within their own organisation so were they able to exasperate the new adherents to the BSP. Grayson's departure was in fact a reflection of his ill-health and of his general disillusionment and it cannot be blamed for the failure of the BSP, for there were weaknesses inherent in the party from its inception.³⁴

The affiliation of the Clarion groups to the British

Socialist Party had been diminished by the SDF's insistence on maintaining the full rigours of the class-war doctrine at the expense of forging a broader alliance. Tom Groom declared shortly after the Unity Conference that 'the Clarion Cycling Club, as a club, cannot become an integral part of the B.S.P. because the new Party will insist very definitely on the full acceptance of Socialism as a necessary qualification for membership.'³⁵ There were other dissenters too. H. Russell Smart appealed to the party to carry out a much-needed scrapping of worn-out mental rubbish in the form of creeds, dogmas and shibboleths such as the ideas of class-consciousness and class war.

Socialism, as it appears to me, is not diverted to fighting this or any other class war to a finish, but to organize society on an entirely different basis which would remove the causes of these fratricidal struggles; and the more of real Socialism we get the less the class war is apparent.³⁶

Smart's views were ridiculed but they demonstrated the heterogeneous nature of the supposedly united party. Groom ceased to edit BSP notes for the Clarion and withdrew from active work for the party shortly after Grayson's departure. The Clarion element was thus severely weakened within the first six months and the paper's coverage of BSP affairs was greatly reduced.

The other major faction at the Unity Conference had been the Syndicalists. Although defeated there they were temporarily encouraged by the new constitution which declared that political and industrial action were complementary to each other. Indeed, the issue of a 'Manifesto to Railway Workers' in December 1911, calling on them to unite with the miners, transport workers, and seamen, 'to act all together and simultaneously', seemed to suggest an awakening to the realities of the industrial situation and a move towards the syndicalist idea of a general strike. This proved to be an illusion, as the special New Year's edition of Justice illustrated. There Hall declared that the BSP 'must get and keep busy shattering, by repeated shocks, the nerve of the system, by encouraging and assisting to organise direct actionist tactics in the industrial field.'³⁷ Quelch and Thomas Kennedy though reiterated the traditional SDF theme that the Socialist party must be the political expression of the working class and, ominously, emphasised the need for party discipline. Outside the movement said Kennedy, soon to be London organiser of the party, 'the present craze for anti-political direct action' is harmless, but inside 'its power for evil is enormously increased.' The call for discipline worried many. Hall replied that 'Democracy must begin at home - inside our own organisation',³ and another comrade retorted that 'rather than have such discipline I prefer a party of free-lancers.'³⁹

As the new year progressed supporters of Hyndman began to attack the syndicalists in Justice and the British Socialist. They contended that any concessions gained by a strike were more than outweighed by the hardship caused to the strikers and their families. They insidiously suggested that syndicalist ideas were 'foreign' ideas, irrelevant to Britain. But, as ever, the main emphasis was that the industrial battlefield was a diversion from the question of political power. Fred Knee argued, quite correctly, that

You cannot get very far by mere "industrial action". So long as the Capitalist state remains, with its army, navy and police, and its hand on the machine of administration, so long will it be possible for this capitalist state, when thoroughly awake to any danger, to throttle any strike, however big....⁴⁰

This was a correct appreciation of the weaknesses of syndicalism, but it made no attempt to establish the relationship which industrial action could have to political action. Herein lay the failure of the BSP leadership. Their policy of capturing parliament to take over the existing state as a vehicle for Socialist legislation ignored the nature of the imperialist state, and it totally neglected the significance of industrial struggle as a challenge to that state.

Hyndman's boast to The Times that he had 'never advocated a strike yet',⁴¹ appalled many members. The failure of the BSP to provide a revolutionary political lead on all fronts of the class struggle encouraged many of the rank and file to turn to syndicalism. Although remaining members of their political party, as industrial militants they sought to express their conviction of the need for revolutionary struggle outside parliament, a need which, in the absence of a lead from the BSP, could only be provided by syndicalism.

As the first Annual Conference of the BSP approached the Hyndmanites redoubled their efforts to discredit the syndicalists by raising the spectre of earlier splits in the movement. Syndicalism, declared Justice, was 'A recrudescence of that parasitical Anarchism which infected the Socialist movement in this country some twenty years ago.'⁴² They deliberately distorted the syndicalist case, F. Victor Fisher suggesting that syndicalism 'merely substitutes the individual ownership of working-class syndicates for the individual ownership of capitalist trusts.'⁴³ In response Hall and his supporters combined their demand for priority to be given to the industrial struggle with a plea for party democracy. E. C. Fairchild pleaded in vain for a synthesis of political and industrial action: 'Let the strike and the vote, the industrial combination and the political party, be as the right arm and the left arm of the human body.'⁴⁴ This, of course, restated the Provisional Committee's declaration of principles, which the Hyndmanites were now ignoring.

An initial disagreement over tactics was now a fundamental theoretical battle, a replaying of countless arguments within the SDF since the days of William Morris. Was there a parliamentary road to Socialism? Hall stated his position unequivocally. 'Industrial Unionism...is the ONLY effective instrument of self-defence and self-assertion in the workers possession at all...our most potent forces for disintegrating Capitalism lie in the industrial field.'⁴¹ Socialism, he argued, could not be brought about by mere Acts of Parliament. That would result in 'Bureaucratic Collectivism alias State Capitalism.' Under Socialism the co-ordinating centres would be Parliaments of Industry, not Parliaments of politicians. This signalled a major battle to be fought at the 1912 Conference.

Meanwhile the question of armaments and war had flared up again, with Zelda Kahan and Quelch engaging in a long-running dispute in the pages of the British Socialist.⁴⁶ Its appearance on the Conference agenda was ensured when Quelch published a paper entitled 'Socialism and Patriotism.'

⁴⁷ The suffrage question also continued to create difficulties, with Leonard Hall once more a forceful opponent of the official line. Socialists should not 'be splitting hairs and uttering demurrers about methods', he wrote, and the BSP should support the suffragettes.⁴⁸ Bax continued to purvey his rabidly anti-feminist views, whilst the Executive condemned 'the hooligan antics' of the suffragettes and maintained its stance in favour of 'universal adult suffrage'.

Such controversy gave heightened significance to the First Annual Conference of the BSP, scheduled for Manchester at the end of May 1912. This would have been eagerly awaited in any case as an indicator of the success or otherwise of the new party. What progress had it made? Reports from around the country indicated increased membership. In London 59 branches were represented at a London District Conference;⁴⁹ the Manchester District Council reported 37 branches in membership, South Salford claiming 230 members and Stockport 300;⁵⁰ the West Yorkshire District Council claimed to represent 1,000 members,⁵¹ the Hull branch announcing 110 members,⁵² Sheffield 200,⁵³ Wakefield 70,⁵⁴ and Bradford a phenomenal 400.⁵⁵ A 'magnificent demonstration' was reported at the London Opera House,⁵⁶ and the Pioneer Boot Company voted to transfer its profits from the SDF to the BSP. Perhaps the only sour note had been struck by the movement abroad, which failed to grant its approbation. Vorwarts, the German Socialist journal, remarked that 'By Socialist Unity in England one has always understood the union of the S.D.P. and I.L.P. That is the problem; there is no other.'⁵⁷ However, that could not be achieved unless the BSP affiliated to the Labour Party and in 1912 that was not seriously on the agenda. What the 1912 Conference would demonstrate was whether or not the BSP could maintain its own unity. As the delegates assembled many must have been fearful of the outcome.

Hyndman's opening address to the 1912 Conference in many ways highlighted the contradictions within the party. He claimed success for the new BSP yet at the same time admitted that there had been difficulties since the Unity Conference. The industrial unrest, he said, made paramount the need for a revolutionary party but the BSP should also support palliatives 'as stepping stones to peaceful revolution.'⁵⁸ Most revealing was his reference to the syndicalists. Having conciliatorily argued that the party should place its resources at the services of the strikers Hyndman rounded savagely on those of the industrial persuasion: 'Of the futility of resuscitated Syndicalism it is needless to speak. There is nothing real and nothing ideal in the floundering and hysterical propaganda of segregated grab.'⁵⁹ The 'Old Guard's' view that the main function of the Socialist Party 'is the organization of an independent political party of the working-class'⁶⁰ remained unchanged and Hall's attempt to make that but one of the party's main functions met with vehement opposition. Quelch argued that the organisation of industrial operations was the task of the Trade Union Congress and Hyndman for his part mocked the proponents of the strike: 'You keep on crying "Don't shoot"! but they shoot you just the same, and you deserve to be shot, because you don't take the means of stopping

the shooting.'⁶¹ Hall's amendment was defeated, but he had gained the support of one-third of the delegates and he came second in the ballot for the Executive Committee, which suggests the strength of support the syndicalists could claim.

Three other controversial questions arose at conference. One was the submission of Quelch's paper on 'Socialism and Patriotism', urging the need for a citizen army and a bigger navy. This was narrowly approved by 83 votes to 65, a further pointer to an increasingly sizable opposition to the Hyndmanites. Similarly the discussion on the suffrage demonstrated a real difference of opinion. But the question of relations with the Labour Party took a new turn. J. Hunter Watts was the spokesman for a tendency which wished the BSP to continue the tradition of the SDF and affiliate to the International Socialist Bureau through the British Committee, where the Labour Party had a majority. A failure to do so, they argued, would isolate the BSP totally from the other wing of the working-class movement. William Gallacher of Paisley suggested a new tactic: the British Socialist Party should 'seek direct and independent affiliation to the International Socialist Bureau'. This was carried by a large majority.

What did the first conference of the BSP reveal about the party? The national press made great play of disorderly

scenes during the debate on industrial action, but Justice passed these off as an 'excess of zeal' on the part of 'comparative newcomers into the movement, whose chief fault is their deadly earnestness'.⁶² The official view was that the Conference set the BSP 'firmly on its feet' and 'defined its policy, its mission and its methods.'⁶³ In one sense certainly the outcome was satisfactory, for an open breach between conflicting wings of the party had been avoided. The constitution, declaring that methods of advancing Socialism embraced both 'the advocacy of industrial unity of all workers' and 'the establishment of a militant Socialist Party in Parliament and on Local Bodies', offered hope to the syndicalists. The reinsertion in the constitution of a provision for immediate demands and co-operation with the unions ensured that the party would not lapse into 'impossibilism'. Those who feared SDF control were soothed by the composition of the new executive. Hall and Russell Smart were both elected, along with E. C. Fairchild and Zelda Kahan representing the left-wing of the old SDF. Ben Tillett and Conrad Noel were closer to these than to the Hyndmanites, who were represented by Quelch, Dan Irving and F. Victor Fisher. Walter Kendall has commented that 'The influx of members at the time of the formation of the BSP loosened the hold of the old guard on the party, and at the same time encouraged new thinking.'⁶⁴ This was true, but in the short term Hyndman and his

supporters were able to fight off the challenge.

Yet all the in fighting appeared removed from reality for organisationally the picture was far from encouraging. The BSP claimed 370 branches and 40,000 members, yet these figures obscured the true situation. Total dues reported were only £650 which, at one shilling per head, gave a total of only 13,000 paying members. This was scarcely an advance on the SDF's membership, and the BSP's total of 150 seats on local government bodies was similarly unimpressive. Compared with an ILP paying membership of 30,000 and its 1,070 local government representatives then it is obvious that the British Socialist Party had not made the hoped for breakthrough. Consequently the Executive launched a 'Great Propaganda Campaign' immediately after the Conference, headed by H. Russell Smart, but the plans for the campaign demonstrated a similar marked failure to grasp reality. The highly optimistic long-term aim was to enrol a million members within five years, but in the short term the target was 100,000 members by the time of the next conference. A committee was appointed to think up new ideas for recruiting members. Meetings were to be attractive and entertaining, using choirs and lantern shows, providing literature, being advertised by striking wall posters. The main focus of attention was to be an 'organised and persistent house-to-house propaganda and distributing of literature.'⁶⁵ An appeal was launched to raise £10,000 to finance this

campaign but the effort barely got off the ground. The last recorded figure showed only £150 raised.⁶⁶ This reflected not only a financial crisis but declining support for the party, even in its Lancashire stronghold. As early as March there were complaints of Lancashire branches defaulting on their dues. The Wigan branch had collapsed by June and others suffered from 'the slump which has been in evidence all over Manchester.'⁶⁷ Reports from the autumn speaking tour indicated far smaller audiences than those present at the beginning of the unity campaign.

Declining support was both a cause and a consequence of financial instability. A feature of the BSP's history is its perpetual appeals for money. Attempts were made to regularise fund-raising; a Trading Committee was established to retail tea, cocoa, tobacco and the 'Red Flag' toffee produced by the Leeds branch; a Co-operative Stores was set up; the Pioneer Boot Company continued to plough its profits into the party.⁶⁸ Yet these efforts merely staved off crisis, and the problem was compounded by the failure of the Twentieth Century Press after a libel action. The company was put in the hands of a receiver and eventually sold in November 1912 for £1,500. A new company was floated and 40,000 one shilling shares were offered to BSP members. So poor was the response that fewer than 5,000 were sold in the ensuing six months. Financial problems were, of course, nothing new for the Socialists but they demonstrated

the failure of the BSP to expand far beyond the confines of the SDF. This was undoubtedly due to political instability, to a power struggle between the SDF and the newer elements in the party as the 'Socialism versus Syndicalism' controversy precipitated a damaging split.

The syndicalist wing of the BSP attempted to counteract the assaults on their position with reasoned arguments. George Simpson suggested that

The aim of Syndicalism and Socialism is the same - viz, the common ownership of the means of production and exchange - but while the Socialists and the Socialist movement believe that the end will be attained by political means, the Syndicalist believes that Socialism will be brought about by means of direct action and the general strike.

Hilaire Belloc's The Servile State had made a considerable impact on many Socialists, and Simpson argued that syndicalist methods were in fact the only protection against this eventuality, for they would result in the autonomy of each industry and commune in terms of organisation, although production would be for the benefit of all. Simpson was at pains to point out that syndicalists were not anti-parliamentarian but, he said, 'economic power always precedes political power, the latter only being the result of the former.' He concluded by quoting Tom Mann's thesis that once the politicians were backed up by 'an economic

fighting force...they will actually be able to do what would now be hopeless for them to attempt to do.'⁶⁹ This reasoned statement was met with a counterblast of abuse and distortion. Syndicalism was classed as impossible and reactionary by Fred Knee,⁷⁰ as a 'transient excrescence on a great world movement'⁷¹ by J Hunter Watts. It was a denial of the class war, an effort 'to belittle, hamper and thwart the political organization and action of the working class'⁷² through a revival of anarchism. Protests at such misrepresentation were ignored and indeed the syndicalists found it increasingly difficult to get their views aired in Justice. Consequently The Clarion and Daily Herald were used as a platform, and the newly-formed Central Labour College became a seeding ground for their ideas. Their attitude hardened and Smart in particular was forthright in his denunciation of 'the old reformist hesitancy.'⁷³

Only Theodore Rothstein seemed able to apply a clear revolutionary perspective to the dispute. Echoing Engels' comments on the industrial upsurge twenty years previously he saw the strike wave as developing class consciousness. 'It is a revolution in the psychology of the working class,' he argued, which created a receptive field for political agitation.

Never mind that we are a political party and
that our object is to fight on behalf of the

working-class politically: by lending our assistance to the working-class in its economic fight...we shall be helping to widen the area and deepen the contents of the class war and thereby accelerate its transformation into a political movement.⁷⁴

The Hyndmanites, conditioned by 30 years of political agitation, had no mind to listen; the syndicalists, forced into a corner, saw no alternative but to carry their views to the extreme. Birmingham saw the dispute in microcosm and one member wrote that 'the Birmingham B.S.P. is being rapidly disintegrated over this miserable question.'⁷⁵ In October came the inevitable break.

The Executive issued a Manifesto on 'Political Action and Direct Action', emphasising the primacy of the former and denouncing supporters of the latter as anarchists, levellers and Luddites, belonging to 'a lower stage of economic development.'⁷⁶ Hall and Smart quickly dissociated themselves from the Manifesto, supported by Conrad Noel who saw it as disastrously one-sided. The three charged that they had not signed the Manifesto and that it had been altered without their knowledge. This was denied but they received widespread support, Doncaster and Huddersfield branches for example passing resolutions in their favour. Hall and Smart resigned from the Executive shortly afterwards and Hall soon left the BSP altogether. He and George Simpson later joined the Socialist Labour Party. Of nine

Birmingham branches represented at the 1912 Conference only two sent delegates to that of 1913. Tom Mann also entered the fray, making a direct appeal to BSP members: 'As the idea of Syndicalism spreads among the younger up-to-date members of the B.S.P. they will realize more and more the necessity for getting rid of the "Old Guard". If they don't the "Old Guard" will destroy the B.S.P.'⁷⁷

The disruption severely weakened the BSP; many of the Clarion element became disenchanted and drifted away. As 1912 drew to a close the party seemed to be faltering from one crisis to another. Fewer than 100 wards were contested in the November municipal elections and successes were few. In December John Scurr, a long-time SDFer and ex-Executive member, announced his resignation from the BSP. The only basis for Socialist unity, said Scurr, was the fusion of the SDF and ILP and this had not been achieved. Even the advances made had been vitiated because 'From the Executive Council down to the smallest branch trouble is existing regarding policy and method in everything that matters.'⁷⁸

An aura of depression surrounded the BSP as it entered 1913. 'It can scarcely be said that the past year has quite fulfilled its promise',⁷⁹ remarked Harry Quelch, and Fred Knee took an even dimmer view of events: 'Judged by all outward appearances 1912 has been a setback. Politically Socialism has achieved nothing in Great Britain in this year of grace.'⁸⁰

Knee's explanation of the BSP's manifest failure was that 'the new body has spoken with too many tongues and till now has lacked anything like unity of purpose or of doctrines.'

⁸¹ Yet it was the very attempt to impose a party orthodoxy, or more specifically the old SDF orthodoxy, which had retarded the party's development. The 'Old Guard's' failure either to adapt to or lead working-class struggles, their refusal to synthesise political and economic struggles, had alienated the majority of the ex-ILP/Clarion element who had brought to the BSP a variety of experiences and contributions. As Pierson quite rightly remarks of the BSP, 'Not only did it fail to unify the various groups but the Social Democrats themselves were increasingly divided',⁸² and the New Year brought more controversy.

At an Executive meeting on 14 December 1912 Zelda Kahan finally succeeded in her long struggle against Hyndman's views on national defence. Her resolution dissociating the BSP from the propaganda for increased naval expenditure was carried by a majority of one. The resolution also called upon the British Government 'to desist from its provocative attitude towards Germany, to declare in favour of abandoning the right to capture at sea in times of war, to establish an entente with Germany, and to decrease its expenditure upon armaments.'⁸³ The internationalist wing of the BSP had achieved a signal victory, but their cause was far from won. F. Victor Fisher resigned from the

Executive in protest at the resolution. Ostensibly his reasons were honourable: the party had not recorded a decision on the matter therefore he favoured liberty of thought, especially as any attempt to force a decision might split the party. Furthermore, he honestly believed that 'Kaiserdom, junkerdom and the Prussian political autocracy' were a threat to Britain.⁸⁴ Darker motives soon became apparent though as Fisher attacked a policy 'largely inspired by comrades alien in blood and race' which would alienate the British public. Hyndman wrote in similar vein in the Socialist Record and it was obvious that the old anti-semitic, nationalist tone of the SDF was reasserting itself. Justice openly pushed the Hyndmanite viewpoint, causing Kahan to protest that the party organ should express party policy. Hyndman resigned as chairman of the BSP, a melodramatic gesture designed to gain support for his position, and Quelch, Lee and others peddled the view, quite astonishingly for professed Marxists, that the issue was not one of Socialist principle and therefore individuals should be free to express their own opinions. The Executive, they said, should not have taken a vote on the matter.

Such arguments were too much for Kahan, who was becoming increasingly irritated by personal attacks on her as an 'alien Socialist' who 'breathes hatred of Britain.'⁸⁵ She pointed out that the resolution was 'simply a reaffirmation of the international Socialist position on the subject,'⁸⁶ which had unfortunately been rendered necessary by

Hyndman's strenuous propaganda on the subject in the pages of the Morning Post and elsewhere. The BSP had to be dissociated from such views. There was a clear difference of opinion here as to the function of an executive. Kahan thought it should 'give our members a lead',⁸⁷ but the Hyndmanites felt that its duty was 'to carry out the mandate of the Party',⁸⁸ as expressed at Annual Conference, an attitude, one feels, expressed with tongue firmly in cheek by Hyndman at least. As the argument continued to rage the 'Old Guard' once more proved themselves masters of political intrigue. At an Executive meeting on 15 February it was decided to suspend the armaments resolution and allow the party to decide the issue, a decision which immediately led Fisher to withdraw his resignation. An amazing about turn? Not at all, for there were only five Executive members present at this meeting. The matter had only been placed on the agenda, without prior notice, as a question arising out of the minutes of the last meeting. Hall was in South Africa, and Fairchild only arrived after the question had been disposed of. Both men had voted for the Kahan resolution. Noel and Tillett were absent from both meetings, but Fisher was allowed to vote because his resignation had yet to be formally considered. Consequently the vote went 3-2 in favour of suspending the armaments resolution.

Zelda Kahan was understandably furious. She resigned from the Executive and threatened to resign from the party altogether if the matter was shelved at Conference. Until

then, for the sake of unity, she would drop the subject 'providing Hyndman and those who think with him pledge themselves to do likewise.'⁸⁹ Her appeal fell on deaf ears and a further split in the party of Socialist unity seemed inevitable. Yet the Blackpool Conference of May 1913 was, in many ways, an anti-climax. Although the national press once more delighted in a number of 'scenes' which occurred, the much-heralded split never transpired. This was due partly to a boycott of the Conference by three-quarters of the Scottish branches, who were largely anti-militarist, but even so Hyndman was heavily criticised by a number of delegates and, realising the strength of opposition, he compromised. For the sake of unity, he said, he was prepared to keep his views to himself. The resolution allowing members freedom to express their views on the subject was withdrawn and in its place the following was adopted:

That this Conference congratulates our French and German comrades on their vigorous opposition to the increase of armaments in their respective countries, and pledges the British Socialist Party, as an integral part of the International Socialist Party, bound by the resolutions on war of Stuttgart and Basle, 1912, to pursue the same policy in Great Britain, with the object of checking the growth of all

forms of militarism.⁹⁰

At the end of the debate Hyndman and Kahan shook hands - a breach had been avoided.

The result of the armaments debate was inconclusive but, in the long term, significant. An opposition group, by remaining in the party to fight for their position, had forced the 'Old Guard' to retreat. After some thirty years a truly 'internationalist' stance had been adopted. The 1913 Conference marked the first victory for the opposition and the beginning of a radical shift in policy for the BSP, presaging the eventual defeat of the Hyndmanite wing, which seceded in 1916 over the very same issue. In one sense Kahan's success had come too late, for the Conference also revealed a party in decline. In his opening address Irving commented that they had not been as successful as they anticipated. 'They certainly had not gone back, but at any rate they had not had the adhesion to their ranks they anticipated from the Independent Labour Party.'⁹¹ Even this was a somewhat sanguine appraisal of the party's fortunes, for the membership was claimed to be only 15,313, as compared to 40,000 at the previous conference. This was little more than the membership of the SDF shortly before the unity campaign, and it seemed indeed that the party was once more centred on the old SDF heartland of London and Lancashire. Recruitment from the ILP had been a transitional phenomenon, a picture reflected by the

history of the BSP in Yorkshire.

As has already been noted the idea of Socialist unity, based upon the ILP and SDF, had never attracted significant support in West Yorkshire, where the ILP was overwhelmingly predominant. The Dewsbury by-election of 1902 and the subsequent Socialist revival did however suggest a body of opinion supportive of the idea, although significantly no Socialist Representation Committee was formed in the area. Grayson, with his roots in the Colne Valley Socialist League, made determined efforts to woo over ILPers to the new party and there were 27 organisations from the county represented at the Unity Conference in 1911. BSP branches mushroomed in the early period of enthusiasm and some 42 branches can be traced at the height of the party's fortunes, with Bradford claiming over 500 members, Sheffield 200, Hull 100 and Leeds also claiming substantial membership. Two District Councils were established in Yorkshire to co-ordinate activities; ILP defections, as we have noted, numbered some 1,300, with the Wakefield branch and Colne Valley Socialist League coming over. Skipton reported 15 ex-ILPers in its ranks and others were recruited in Keighley. In March 1912, when both locally and nationally the BSP was at its zenith, the West Yorkshire District Council claimed to represent 1,000 members. Add to this branches not represented on the Council and the membership of the Colne Valley Socialist League and a figure of 2,000 members in West Yorkshire seems reasonable. Yet significantly no

prominent ILPer other than Grayson joined the BSP and leading ILP figures such as Fred Jowett and W. Leach in Bradford were severely critical of the new party.⁹² After March 1912 support fell away rapidly. Twenty-two branches were represented at the 1912 Conference but only 10 at that of 1913. Essentially the Yorkshire BSP had slimmed down to its pre-1911 SDF core. Electoral success was minimal, with only F. Lockwood Liles in Bradford and Alf Barton in Sheffield in November 1913 counting as genuine BSP victories. Bradford was, in fact, the most successful BSP centre but even there it faded badly after 1912. When the national body imposed John Stokes, secretary of the London Trades Council, upon East Bradford as its parliamentary candidate the local branch was unable to gain ILP acquiescence and its chances of contesting, in the Labour interest, the constituency it regarded as its own appeared slim. The Leeds branches remained active under the tutelage of Bert Killip, who was elected to the Executive in 1913, and Sheffield could also boast a reasonably strong branch, which inclined towards syndicalism. But in general, 'Ranged against the membership and successes of the ILP, the BSP's impact was embarrassingly poor and failure generated failure.'⁹³ Developments in Leeds clearly demonstrated this, for in April 1913 the Leeds BSP decided, by a substantial majority, to affiliate to the local Labour Party. Its correspondent wrote to the Leeds Citizen,

explaining that 'we sincerely believe it will place us as a B.S.P. branch in a far better position for helping the workers of the district in their political aspirations and will make us more effective in fighting the class struggle'.⁹⁴ The idea of uniting the ILP and the SDF outside the Labour Party had been tried and found wanting, and the branch therefore substituted Labour unity for Socialist unity. This move foreshadowed events at a national level and demonstrated the failure of the Socialist alternative to the Labour alliance.

The rationale for pursuing Socialist unity had been that the Labour Party, by compromising with capitalism, was ensuring its survival. 'Reformism' simply ensured the postponement of Socialism. Conference after conference of the SDF had rejected affiliation to the Labour Party and this attitude had been carried over into the BSP. Indeed the BSP went further than the SDF in seeking separate affiliation to the ISB on the grounds that the Labour Party was not a Socialist party. The ISB view had been defined by the Kautsky resolution of 1908 and direct affiliation was refused, but the BSP leaders still rejected the International's advice and refused to retreat into 'Labourism'. Relations between the BSP, the ILP, and the Labour Party became very strained as the BSP attacked the right of the latter to be members

of the Bureau at all, and a dispute over the Leicester by-election in 1913 caused a major rift.

The Leicester Labour Party decided to contest a by-election in this two-member constituency, but both the Labour Party Executive and the NAC of the ILP refused to sanction a candidate. The reason was that James Ramsay MacDonald held one of the seats and an arrangement with the Liberals guaranteed them no opposition in the other. Local dissatisfaction encouraged the BSP to nominate Edward Hartley of Bradford, who polled a respectable 2,580 votes. In an acrimonious exchange of letters after the election the BSP accused MacDonald of actively sabotaging their campaign, and when J. Hunter Watts once again suggested affiliation to the Labour Party a Justice editorial raged against alliance with 'an invertebrate, incoherent and lymphatic Labourism.' Quelch, as ever, was adamant. 'We believe that we are right; therefore, those who differ from us must be wrong.'⁹⁵ Yet Quelch soon found himself out-distanced by events as the ISB increased the pressure upon the British Socialist Party to affiliate to the Labour Party. A conference was held in London on 18 July, 1913, attended by representatives of the BSP, ILP and the Fabian Society and presided over by Vandervelde and Huysmans for the ISB. The latter suggested two measures: that a United Socialist Council should be formed, federation as a preparation for fusion, and that all sections should affiliate

to the Labour Party. Irving, for the BSP, argued that Socialist unity should not be dependent upon affiliation to the Labour Party, whereas the ILP representatives argued to the contrary. Glasier wanted no unity at all: 'The ILP is convinced that the spirit of the B.S.P. is fatal, and therefore it is not wise to tighten the band.'⁹⁶ Old reflexes died hard but ISB pressure led to an agreement that the two proposals should go to the various executives and a further conference of the full executives would be held in November.

As the matter was debated in Justice it quickly became apparent that the mood within the BSP had changed. Hyndman, Hunter Watts and Irving all expressed support for affiliation, and so too did Zelda Kahan. Their withdrawal from the Labour Party, she argued, had not attracted to them the best elements of the Labour movement and had facilitated the rightward drift of the Labour Party. Because the BSP was outside it was mistrusted, seen as hostile and fault-finding, whereas 'Inside the Labour Party our criticisms would gain a far wider hearing' and 'we can hope to strengthen considerably the left wing...and by appearing as allies, as friends, as one of them, we shall have more influence on the rank and file'. Her most telling point, a tacit acceptance of the BSP's position as a political sect, was that 'The Labour Party, with all its weakness, is an effort, however faltering, of the working-class to take

its destiny in its own hands, and as such should be encouraged and helped by us.'⁹⁷ George Moore Bell perhaps best summed up the prevailing mood when he wrote:

Why should we Socialists paddle our canoe in the shallowest of shallow water, instead of launching out into the broad stream of English political life?....The English people won't have a Socialist Party. They like compromise, and the Labour Party is a compromise. Up to date a very poor one; but it is there and we are here. It lacks spirit, and courage, and knowledge. Are we going to help it get those things?...Shall we take the field, or shall we leave it to the Liberals?⁹⁸

Dissillusion, despair, or a recognition of political reality? Try as he might Harry Quelch could not stem the tide which was now flowing in favour of affiliation. He died in September 1913, and in many senses the spirit of the old SDF died with him. Quelch more than Hyndman epitomised the pioneering role of the Social-Democratic Federation and his departure symbolised the radically altered nature of the party. The case for the opposition was now left in the hands of a number of comparatively minor figures, of whom only H. Russell Smart was well-known. Smart thought the ISB should have attempted to unify the

Socialists first and then turned its attention to the Labour Party, but even he was soon forced to admit that the time for argument was past. As the campaign for affiliation gathered momentum he turned his attention instead to the terms of the agreement, arguing that the federated Socialist Party should carry equal weight with the Labour Party. As the unions dominated by sheer weight of numbers, said Smart, so should each Socialist voter be counted when representation was discussed.

In moving towards affiliation the BSP was admitting that the movement for Socialist unity had failed. As Justice remarked, 'The late S.D.P. did its best for Socialist Unity in the formation of the B.S.P.', but 'the combination has not been as large as we could have wished'.⁹⁹ Conceding that, after initial successes, the BSP had slimmed down to its SDF core the paper declared that: 'Socialist Unity is of such paramount importance that almost everything...may be waived if only it can be accomplished.'¹⁰⁰ Thus, on 13 December 1913, a Conference of the BSP, ILP and Fabian Society committed the British Socialist Party to some form of alliance with Labour. Debate centred around four demands from the BSP as a condition for affiliation. Two of these, that the ultimate aim of abolishing wage slavery should be clearly stated and that the unions should be aided in all struggles against capitalism, were easily settled. Neither the Fabians nor the ILP, however, would accept a recognition

of the class war, stressing that the constitution of the Labour Party would need to be altered. A compromise of sorts was reached when the ILP and Fabian delegates agreed to fight for such a change within the Labour Party. On the fourth point, that the BSP should be allowed to run candidates as avowed Socialists, there was no agreement but it was eventually decided to put the question to the members of the various organisations.

As a preliminary step a joint committee was formed to organise demonstrations under the auspices of all these Socialist bodies. 'From this joint committee and these common meetings the permanent United Socialist Council will doubtless grow.'¹⁰¹ The BSP Executive made strenuous efforts to attract the support of the membership, their decision doubtless reinforced by ever falling numbers and the demise of The British Socialist due to declining sales. A manifesto to the members assured them that the BSP would maintain its integrity as a revolutionary Socialist body within the Labour Party, helping to influence the direction of 'the political expression of the working class movement of this country'. Many remained unconvinced. The Derby branch expressed the view that 'if once we affiliate with the less advanced sections of the Labour movement then we are in the position to be dragged down to their level by the majority vote.'¹⁰² Frank Tanner made an impassioned attack on the idea, bitterly declaring that 'all

the concession is on one side.'¹⁰³ Herbert Burrows, an early member of the SDF, also wrote expressing opposition¹⁰⁴ and the Leicester branch was worried that affiliation would 'ultimately break up the branch.'¹⁰⁵ If the leadership was concerned by the opposition it was encouraged by the mostly successful series of demonstrations held in March at Cardiff, Newcastle, Glasgow, Leeds, Birmingham and London. The fact that the ILP, at their Conference, seemed to have moved to the left by voting overwhelmingly in favour of a Bradford resolution that 'the PLP be asked to vote on all issues only in accordance with the principles for which the Party stands' also gave them grounds for optimism. Hyndman and Irving pressed the case for affiliation vigorously at the BSP Conference in April and their admission that the SDF would have been far more successful if it had remained within the Labour Party was a tacit acceptance that past policy had been mistaken. Prior to the ballot Justice opened its pages to ILP leaders such as Fenner Brockway to reinforce the arguments for union. A number of protests were registered over the fact that the referendum ballot paper allowed only one vote for the two questions of Socialist unity and affiliation to the Labour Party, thereby making it impossible to vote for the first without approving the second. Such complaints went unheeded and on 28 May the referendum result showed a marginal vote in favour of affiliation to the Labour Party:

In favour of Socialist unity proposal	3263
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Against Socialist unity proposal	2410
Spoilt papers	52
Majority in favour	853

The large-scale abstention and narrow vote in favour demonstrated the still considerable hostility to the idea of affiliation to the Labour Party. That the question was won must be put down to the massive intervention of the leadership on the side of affiliation, and the result was received with a great deal of hostility in some areas. The Derby, Farnworth, Blackley and Moston branches seceded, and these were all areas where the ILP had come over in 1911. A number of Dewsbury members broke away to form a branch of the Socialist Labour Party, which eventually replaced the BSP. Seven London branches asked the Executive to reconsider the matter and not to accept the pro-affiliation vote. But on 23 June 1914 the British Socialist Party made a formal application for admission to the Labour Party. This process of events effectively demonstrated the demise of the long-held desire for Socialist unity, the dream of a mass Socialist party. However much the leadership attempted to gloss over the fact, the BSP was now committed to a Labour as opposed to Socialist alliance and had accepted the continued separate identity of the BSP and ILP. The decision also marked the end of an era, for it signalled a decisive break with the old SDF traditions. The distinguishing characteristic of the SDF had been its insistence on the need to steer clear of 'reformism' although

this emphasis was often obscured by a somewhat muddled political strategy. For thirty years it had formed a distinctive strand in the evolution of the British Labour movement. The formation of the BSP had been an attempt to expand its influence without compromising its principles but the attempt had failed. Recognising this failure the party, after considerable heart-searching, substantially shifted its position. What had been anathema over 30 years now became 'practical politics.' Where Marx had been quoted before to defend 'separatism' he was now used to justify affiliation to the Labour Party.¹⁰⁶ As one historian has noted, 'The BSP was...an uneasy amalgam of forces and carried within it the seeds of its own dissolution.'¹⁰⁷ Hyndman admitted as much when he dedicated his book, The Evolution of Revolution, 'To my comrades of the OLD SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION the pioneers of Scientific Socialism in Great Britain 1880-1911.' He and others of the 'Old Guard' came to regard the events of 1911 as a mistake, and in many ways the Social-Democratic Federation's history can be seen to have ended in that year. The BSP's affiliation to the Labour Party was delayed by the outbreak of war, a war which completed the disintegration of the old Social-Democratic tradition.

NOTES

1. D. Morris, 'The Origins of the British Socialist Party', in N.W. Labour History Society, Bulletin 8, 1982-83
2. Clarion, 25 February 1910.
3. Social-Democrat, May 1910.
4. Justice, 24 September 1910.
5. Clarion, 4 August 1911.
6. Ibid., 18 August 1911.
7. Justice, 9 September 1911.
8. Clarion, 11 August 1911.
9. The Worker, 12 August 1911.
10. Clarion, 11 August 1911.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 8 September 1911.
13. Ibid., 1 September 1911.
14. Ibid., 29 September 1911.
15. Socialist Unity Conference Report, 1911. London, (1970 reprint), pp.23-4.
16. Clarion, 6 October 1911.
17. Leonard Hall and Russell Smart were ex-ILPers, Victor Grayson, George Hagger and Tom Groom represented the Clarion-BSP element, and George Simpson was an unattached Marxist with strong syndicalist leanings.
18. Socialist Unity Conference Report, pp.4-5.
19. Ibid., p.11.
20. Clarion, 4 November 1910.

21. Justice, 9 September 1911.
22. Pierson, British Socialists, p.277.
23. Clarion, 13 October 1911.
24. Morris, op.cit., p.35.
25. Ibid., p.36.
26. K. Laybourn, 'A Story of Buried Talents and Wasted Opportunities: The Failure of the Socialist Unity movement in Yorkshire 1911-14', The Journal of Regional and Local Studies, VOL.7, No. 2, Autumn 1987, pp.12-13.
See also Laybourn and Reynolds, op.cit., pp.162-163.
27. Clarion, 20 October 1911.
28. Ibid., 24 November 1911.
29. Kendall, op.cit., p.40.
30. Clarion, 5 January 1912.
31. 'The Lost Vision: A Spring Fantasy' in Justice, 4 May 1912.
32. Laybourn, op.cit., p.14.
33. Leonard Hall, for example, referred to 'Grayson's attempt to form a Grayson party' in a letter to Harry Williams, secretary of the Birmingham BSP, on 24 December 1911. This letter, with other BSP material, can be found in the London School of Economics, Coll. Misc. 155, Item 49/54. Williams himself referred to 'a Graysonian clot' within the party.
34. The best account of Grayson's career can be found in Reg Groves, The Strange Case of Victor Grayson (1975)

A more recent assessment is provided by David Clark in Labour's Lost Leader, Victor Grayson, which is interesting for its attempt to trace Grayson after his "disappearance" in 1920.

35. Clarion, 20 October 1911.
36. Justice, 25 November 1911.
37. Ibid., 30 December 1911.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., 6 January 1912.
40. British Socialist, June 1912.
41. The Times, 24 February 1912.
42. Justice, 27 April 1912.
43. Clarion, 5 April 1912.
44. Ibid., 26 April 1912.
45. Ibid., 3 May 1912.
46. British Socialist, December 1911-March 1912.
47. Justice, 18 May 1912.
48. Ibid., 30 March 1912.
49. Ibid., 13 January 1912.
50. Ibid., 20 January 1912.
51. Ibid., 2 March 1912.
52. Ibid., 23 December 1911.
53. Clarion, 22 December 1911.
54. Justice, 9 December 1911.
55. Clarion, 1 December 1911.
56. Justice, 20 April 1912.
57. Ibid., 4 November 1911.

58. BSP First Annual Conference Report, 1912, p.8.
59. Ibid., p.9.
60. Ibid., p.15.
61. Ibid., p.18.
62. Justice, 1 June 1912.
63. Ibid.
64. Kendall, op.cit., p.61.
65. Clarion, 21 June 1912.
66. Ibid., 18 October 1912.
67. Justice, 15 June 1912.
68. The Pioneer Boot Company contributed £5-5/- weekly to the BSP. See Justice, 14 September 1912.
69. Justice, 19 October 1912.
70. British Socialist, June 1912.
71. Justice, 5 October 1912.
72. Ibid., 19 October 1912.
73. Ibid., 3 August 1912.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid., 2 November 1912.
76. Daily Herald, 31 October 1912.
77. The Syndicalist, November 1912.
78. Justice, 7 December 1912.
79. Ibid., 28 December 1912.
80. The Socialist Annual, 1913, p.17.
81. Ibid., p.16.
82. Pierson, British Socialists, p.253.

83. Justice, 11 January 1913.
84. Clarion, 3 January 1913.
85. Justice, 11 January 1913.
86. Clarion, 31 January 1913.
87. Justice, 11 January 1913.
88. Ibid., 18 January 1913.
89. Ibid., 15 March 1913.
90. Second Annual Conference Report of the BSP, 1913, p.8.
91. Ibid., p.5.
92. See Bradford Pioneer, 7 February 1913.
93. Layborn & Reynolds, op.cit., p.163.
94. Quoted in the Bradford Pioneer, 11 April 1913.
95. Justice, 26 July 1913.
96. Ibid., 9 August 1913.
97. Ibid., 4 October 1913.
98. Ibid., 9 August 1913.
99. Ibid., 11 October 1913.
100. Ibid., 20 December 1913.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid., 26 March 1914.
103. Ibid., 2 April 1914.
104. Ibid., 9 April 1914.
105. Ibid., 2 April 1914.
106. See Fred Knee in Justice, 14 May 1914.
107. Morris, op.cit., p.39.

CHAPTER XVI
WAR AND REVOLUTION

War came in 1914 with startling suddenness, taking Socialists of all shades of opinion by surprise. The assassination at Sarajevo had caused little stir and the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia was viewed simply as another of those incessant Balkan conflicts which, if it came to anything at all, would remain localised and be settled by diplomacy. The ISB's reaction to the Austrian invasion of Serbia was simply to advance the planned International Socialist Congress to the 9 August and change the venue from Vienna to Paris. That, it was felt, would pressurise governments to remain neutral and afforded ample time for the Socialist movement to decide on a course of action if action were to prove necessary. Glasier, a British delegate to the ISB, affirmed the readiness of the British proletariat to obey the International's instructions down to the last detail, thereby extolling the two pre-war myths of the Second International: that the International Socialist Bureau was an effective co-ordinator of the European parties and that Socialist internationalism was an effective instrument for the prevention of war. The shattering of those myths in the first week of August caused shock, amazement, bewilderment and horror, led to schism within the ranks of the various national parties, including the BSP, and signalled the

demise of the Second International. Any brief examination of the International's attitude to war explains the consternation which the outbreak of war caused and the confused reaction of the Socialist parties to it; it also locates the SDF/BSP on the spectrum of Socialist thought before 1914.

The founding conference of the International, held in Paris in 1889, had laid down two fundamental prescriptions which influenced Socialist thought for the next 25 years and which were basically a recipe for inactivity. Implicit in the resolution condemning standing armies and urging the formation of citizen armies, a 'people in arms', was the assumption that the interests of the proletariat, everywhere, coincided, and that the working class would not be divided by quarrels between capitalist governments. This led to the comfortable belief that the spread of Socialism and the existence of the Socialist International would prevent war without further action, a belief paralleling that of many Marxists that the inevitable collapse of capitalism absolved them from the need for immediate revolutionary action. Secondly, as standing armies were liable to provoke wars so the Socialists argued that citizens' militia would prevent them; the 'people in arms' would recognise a just war and would not fight in another cause. Here was a rhetorical internationalism which was essentially pacifist in its rationale and non-activist in implication. Moreover, it ignored certain realities, realities which were not significant whilst

the question of war was largely academic, as it was in the late nineteenth century, but which became increasingly relevant with the increased international tension of the early twentieth century. As James Joll has emphasised,

Just as the problem of war became one to which socialists, with increasing anxiety and insistence, were forced to devote their attention, so it revealed more clearly than any other the dilemmas, equivocations and difficulties in which the members of the Socialist International found themselves.¹

The Second International was essentially a very loose organisation of autonomous national units, its proclaimed solidarity a sham solidarity which disguised the distrust between the various national parties and the theoretical divisions which had plagued it since its inception. As G. Haupt has pointed out, at times of crisis the distrust between the parties was obvious. During the Balkan crises of 1911-13 there were 'profound disagreements between the socialist parties of the countries directly concerned; each party sought to minimise its own country's responsibility and, while justifying its own inactivity, to persuade the others to act.'² Hyndman's antipathy towards the Germans was the supreme example of this. He and his supporters attacked German plans for world domination whilst defending

the arms policy of their own country. Always distrustful of the German Social-Democrats Hyndman became openly hostile to them and, at the SDF's Coventry conference of 1911, he accused them of sabotaging the International's anti-war campaign. Hyndman's outburst led to his removal from the ISB, and they were regarded as individual eccentricities, but in truth the German Socialists were always pessimistic about the possibility of preventing war. The right of the party, epitomised by Bernstein and Bebel, was strongly nationalistic and there was a reluctance to step into the field of foreign policy for fear that this might lead to government repression. Bebel had often warned that the German party would be unable to prevent war, arguing that if they indeed possessed that strength they would be able to form a government. Conversely the French Socialists, particularly Jaurès and Vaillant, were convinced that international Socialism was a real force which could be mobilised to prevent a general war. After the Agadir incident distrust grew between the French and German parties.

Given these divisions the International Socialist Bureau, established at the Paris Congress of 1900 as a co-ordinating body, found it very difficult to function effectively. Indeed, the Germans were always reluctant to sanction the convening of the ISB and for much of the time it operated as little more than a letter box for the various parties. It was further restricted by the fact that there was no agreed Socialist

theory as to the action to be adopted in the event of war, nor any differentiation between wars. This reflected the fact that there existed within the International a basic division between right, left and centre; from the first it had lacked a consensus on programme and tactics, and these divisions played a part in its disintegration during the war. The right, or 'revisionist' wing of the movement, associated with Bernstein, held that capitalist collapse was not imminent and that the democratic state was not oppressive but an instrument to be mastered for the realisation of Socialism. In an advanced democratic state the interests of Socialists were identical with those of the State. From this proposition, of course, it was easy to deduce that Socialists had a duty to defend their homeland. The centre, 'orthodox-Marxist', viewpoint characteristic of the Second International, which largely embraced the SDF, found in Kautsky its chief theoretician. Its adherents accepted the inevitability of Socialism via a peaceful revolution. They relied on the operation of impersonal economic forces rather than the purposeful efforts of man, which meant that 'Beneath the brave show of revolutionary phraseology the germ of reformism was already at work.'³ Jules Guesde, the extreme exponent of this position, thus argued that there was no need for a special treatment of the question of war; they should simply propagandise until the victory of Socialism removed the cause of war and war itself. The majority of

centrists however were uncertain, their theoretical orientation cloudy. They accepted war as a characteristic of capitalist society, but felt that the working class could redirect capitalist trends towards peace; thus an agitation against militarism, a refusal to vote war credits, was acceptable but direct action against war, for example the general strike, was not. This was certainly the view of the German SPD, who wished to avoid any action which would give the government the excuse to suppress them. German Socialists were also troubled by the fear that those nations with the best organised proletariat might find themselves at the mercy of attack from countries where Socialism was less influential. Such considerations meant that the centrists, at best, could offer a long-term perspective for the triumph of pacifism but no theories for confronting the imminent threat of war.

These two strands of thought predominated in the pre-war International. Opposed to them was the as yet minuscule grouping of the left around Lenin and the Bolsheviks. They were scornful of the reformist road to Socialism, urging that a violent revolution was needed to shatter the bourgeois state. Bourgeois democracy was simply 'veiled dictatorship'. Theirs was an activist philosophy, opposed to the idea of waiting patiently for the historical process to unravel and therefore seeing war as an opportunity to foment revolution. Such a perspective was shared by some in the West, including Rosa Luxemburg, but she opposed the centralised organisation

of the Bolsheviks and argued for a general strike rather than an armed uprising in the event of war. Thus the Second International, anxious to prevent war, could not agree on the methods and tactics to be adopted, either before or after war broke out. Nor was this the extent of the confusion, for many Socialists saw no clearcut division between revolution and patriotism. In France the two had been closely linked since the overthrow of the monarchy; in Germany the foundation and strengthening of the nation state coincided with the advent of a mass Socialist party. Hyndman was by no means alone in his view that the Socialists of each nation must work out their own route to Socialism, that Socialism was not anti-national.

The differences between these groupings were argued out at Congress after Congress, and within the national parties, in debates theological in character. Yet transcending the divisions was the world-view of Socialism as one coherent movement; the goal was the same, the tactics might differ. Similarly resolution after resolution denounced war as the product of capitalism and argued that only the working class, organised internationally, could guarantee peace. The question was how? Most cherished was the idea of forming a citizen army to defend the nation, a utopian dream in view of the fact that nowhere did the Socialists form a government able to implement such a scheme. But the significance of the proposal was that it presupposed the necessity of national

defence in certain circumstances. Jaurès quite clearly stated that French Socialists would be justified in resisting a German attack, as did Bebel for Germany in the event of an assault by Russia. Similar confusion existed on the question of imperialism. Orthodox Marxists agreed with Lenin that colonial expansion prolonged the life of capitalism but would eventually lead to war and the collapse of the system; many however simply argued that all that was needed was to await that collapse. Others justified imperialism on the grounds that it raised the living standards of backward peoples. Some German revisionists supported it as a means of maintaining the living standards of their own working class. Hyndman and others saw the colonies as a breeding ground for Socialist expansion. Definitions of national defence and imperialism were further to cloud the issue in 1914, and the inconsistencies of the Socialist position were ridiculed by, amongst others, Hervé. At the Stuttgart Congress of 1907 he launched a violent attack on the bureaucracy and 'embourgeoisement' of the German party and proposed a general strike in the event of war. The experience of Socialist minorities in Parliament, their ineffectiveness, allied to the impact of the 1905 revolution in Russia upon the Socialist movement, won support for his ideas. The Russian revolution demonstrated the possibilities of direct popular action against war, and reminded Socialists of all persuasions that a passive awaiting of the pre-ordained collapse of capitalism

was not the inevitable route to Socialism. Bebel, however, conscious of the power of the German state, forced through a compromise which committed no one to anything. The Balkan crises and rapidly developing arms race after Stuttgart though concentrated minds on the increasing possibility of war, and at Copenhagen in 1910 Keir Hardie co-sponsored with the French Socialist Edouard Vaillant a further resolution on behalf of a general strike against war. By this time German Socialists were deeply suspicious of the British in the light of Hyndman's and Blatchford's propaganda, and the proposal was shelved for consideration by the next Congress in Vienna. This Congress, of course, never took place.

Mutual distrust and suspicion augured ill for successful Socialist action in the event of war, yet at the time of the first Balkan war the ISB finally got its act together. All parties were urged to convene mass demonstrations against great power intervention, with a resulting mobilisation of 250,000 in Berlin on 20 October 1912. A manifesto issued by the emergency congress at Basle exhorted the unity of the workers to secure peace. The manifesto declared that 'The fear of the ruling classes that a revolution of the workers would follow the declaration of a European war has proved an essential guaranty of peace'.⁴ The end of the Balkan crises seemed to confirm the theory that a European war was improbable. It was felt that the economic interests of capitalism militated against war, but more significantly the Socialists were

self-satisfied. This successful mobilisation gave them the illusion of power and seemed to wipe away any differences between the French and German Socialists, who published a joint manifesto in March 1913. Thus the Basle Congress marked

the high point of the International's optimistic self-confidence, and it reveals how far socialism had become almost a religious movement in feeling, and how much blind faith was placed in the actual existence of the International....The crisis of 1914 found the Socialists of Europe with the bells of Basle still ringing in their ears.⁵

As late as the 1st of August 1914 Socialist leaders seemed sublimely unaware of the likelihood of war; they were, suggests Haupt, 'captive of their own myths',⁶ about their ability to prevent war. Consequently, taken totally by surprise, they became disorientated spectators of events. Tommy Jackson remembered that Socialists were 'paralysed by our unbelief in the reality of the war-danger....Its coming swept us off our feet as straws swept by a big wind.'⁷ The British Socialists, after the meeting of the ISB at the end of July, had issued a manifesto signed by Hardie and Henderson urging the working class to prevent their government from co-operating with Russian despotism. On the 1st and 2nd of August huge anti-war demonstrations were held, and from the Trafalgar Square gathering on the 2nd came a

resolution protesting

against any step being taken by the government of this country to support Russia, either directly or in consequence of any understanding with France, as being not only offensive, but disastrous to Europe...as we have no interest, direct or indirect, in the threatened quarrels which may result from the action of Austria in Serbia, the government of Great Britain should rigidly decline to engage in war, but should confine itself to efforts to bring about peace as speedily as possible.⁸

Hyndman, like the other British Socialists, had thus far adhered to the peace resolutions of the International, but the British declaration of war on 4 August brought this unity to an end. On that day the French and German Socialists approved the war credits for their governments, and on that day the Labour movement in Britain, as a whole, sided with its government. Their pacifism had been active only insofar as it was confined to mass rallies and demonstrations; Socialism internationalism was submerged by the wave of nationalism. The outbreak of war signalled more clearly than anything else the breach between the revolutionary phraseology of the Second International and the reformist practice of its member parties. Victor Adler summed up the dilemma of all: 'An

incomprehensible German to have done anything else. An incomprehensible Social Democrat to have done it without being racked with pain, without a hard struggle with himself and with all his feelings.'⁹

The Social-Democratic Federation had always regarded itself as an orthodox Marxist party and was seen as such by its Continental counterparts. Both in theory and in practice it aligned itself with the centre, with Kautskian orthodoxy, and the Federation provided a classic example of the party which expounded revolutionary theory but espoused reformist practice. Yet, although the Federation vehemently criticised the 'revisionism' of Bernstein, its leadership had drifted rightwards, orientating the party towards electioneering and the securing of representation on local and national bodies. On the question of war and foreign policy Hyndman and the 'old guard' were firmly on the right of the Socialist spectrum, and his advocacy of military preparation and his commitment to the British nation had stimulated increasing opposition within the party. An internationalist outlook was particularly strong in the Scottish branches and amongst the émigré element in East London, and it held a strong appeal for many younger recruits. The election of Theodore Rothstein to the Executive in 1901 marked an early success for the opposition elements, and as Hyndman's anti-German campaign mounted so did the reaction to it. In many ways Hyndman's

letter to the Morning Post in 1910 was the turning point, antagonising many previously loyal supporters, including John Maclean. A referendum of members in 1911 defeated Hyndman and voted in favour of decreased military expenditure, whilst the Socialist Unity Conference of that year further strengthened the opposition ranks. The nature of the opposition was confused, mirroring the situation in the International as a whole. Most SDFers accepted the need for national defence but they argued, against Hyndman, that it was no part of a Socialist's task to increase the possibility of war by agitating for additional armaments. Moreover, Hyndman's pronouncements stirred up chauvinism and made the task of the German Socialists that much harder - the German government could point to Hyndman's patriotism and contrast it with the supposed treachery of his German counterparts. Therefore the bulk of the opposition to Hyndman lined up with the International in urging that the Socialists of each nation should agitate against the military preparation of their own government; they did not envisage action against war because they felt that the international solidarity of the proletariat would prevent war. Theirs was primarily a pacifist sentiment.

In Britain, as in Europe, there existed an embryonic left-wing and John Maclean was the major spokesman for this tendency. The first signs of this theoretical position emerged at the 1912 conference of the BSP when William Gallacher of Paisley, a product of John Maclean's Marxist

classes, opposed Quelch's paper on 'Socialism and Patriotism'. His attack centred on the notion of a citizen army, very much an article of faith for the Socialists of the Second International. In countries like France and Germany, which had conscription, the citizen army was a progressive if somewhat utopian idea. For Britain, an island state with voluntary recruitment, the concept was largely irrelevant. Nonetheless, orthodox SDF opinion supported it, whilst the Hyndmanites argued that the crux of our defence was the navy and they equated the fleet with the continental national militia as a purely defensive weapon. Gallacher ridiculed the idea of a citizen army as utopian, arguing that the ruling class would never grant it and that it would be totally ineffective against foreign aggression. As for the navy, one couldn't have a citizen navy. 'They should condemn all ideas of patriotism', said Gallacher, 'and all idea of militarism, unless it took the form of shooting down those who exploited them. They must stand as Internationalists, and not trouble about nationalism.'¹⁰ Few would have gone as far as Gallacher at that time in his renunciation of 'all idea of patriotism' but a number sympathised with his assault on the citizen army, which they saw as a disguised advocacy of conscription. There was thus a broad swathe of opposition within the BSP, encompassing the centre and left, which achieved further success in 1912 with the election of Zelda Kahan to the executive, 'a resounding victory for a woman at that time

still in her twenties.'¹¹ The issue of national defence nearly caused a split in the party in 1913, which was only prevented by Hyndman's promise not to produce statements prejudicial to the party and quite clearly the London leadership was losing its traditional control over the party. Also significant was the absence of many Scottish branches from this Conference; Gallacher and others were at this time touring Scotland in a 'war against war' campaign. When Quelch died in 1913 H. W. Lee became the new editor of Justice and he was replaced as party secretary by Albert Inkpin, who was not closely identified with the older leadership. Demands at the 1914 Conference for members' control of Justice and the party's electoral campaigns emphasised the challenge to the 'old guard'. Thus, although the conflict over the arms budget died down after the compromise of 1913, it re-emerged in sharpened form with the outbreak of hostilities in 1914. The war brought all the existing internal conflicts to a head and, as Stanley Pierson has commented,

the experiences of wartime renewed the inherent tendency of British Marxism to divide into incompatible modes of action. Marxists in Britain once more faced the choice between a fuller involvement in existing political institutions and a new effort to transcend the structures of national life.¹²

The BSP, like its European counterparts, was taken totally by surprise at the outbreak of war. Its reaction was hesitant, and uncomprehending, although a few brave individuals outspokenly attacked the war from the beginning. Fred King of Grimsby had to receive a police escort from Dewsbury Market Place after arguing that workers would be as well off under the Kaiser as King George. Sam Walker of Manchester and Arthur Cox in London were arrested for voicing similar sentiments. But once the initial shock was over the Hyndmanites were the first to reassert themselves. A BSP manifesto of 13 August took the view that Germany was the aggressor but urged moderation on its readers: 'we appeal to you to distinguish soberly between the mass of the German people and the Prussian military caste which dominates the German Empire.'¹³ The Socialists' task was to protect the interests of the working class during wartime by agitating for rent controls and State control of food supplies and employment. Meanwhile they should continue to propagandise against secret diplomacy to ensure that there was never a repetition of such a cataclysm. However, the overwhelming concern of the manifesto was the unity of the party. 'All ordinary questions of policy and tactics', it declared 'are of little or no importance at the present time.'¹⁴ Unity was needed to ensure that the BSP was able to take full advantage of the cessation of hostilities and meanwhile the party had plenty to do to reduce war's impact on the workers

and influence in a Socialist direction the collectivist policy which the Government would be forced to adopt.

There was little reaction to this manifesto, a reflection of the confusion which the war had engendered within the opposition ranks. Most BSPers, in common with all shades of opinion, felt that the war would be short and whilst they despaired at the stampede of European Socialists into the patriotic ranks they saw no clear route ahead. They therefore, as T. A. Jackson admitted, 'trimmed' as far as possible, evading any direct consideration of the issue. They clung to the resolutions of the International which had urged them, in the event of war, to work for a negotiated peace and a speedy resumption of fraternal relations between nations. What forced the oppositionists to address the question more directly was a further manifesto in September which called upon members to accept invitations to participate in the recruiting campaigns. The left wing was outraged, seeing this as a betrayal of internationalism, a contradiction of both the Stuttgart and Basle Congresses which the BSP had endorsed. Opposition was strongest amongst the émigré membership in East London and in Glasgow. Fifteen out of eighteen London branches demanded a withdrawal of the statement and although Hyndman protested that the resolution had only advocated participation if members were allowed to speak in favour of a Socialist programme Joe Fineberg, a prominent left wing critic, won an executive by-election for

London in October. It was also significant that Peter Petroff, to the left of Fineberg, polled as heavily as F. Victor Fisher, the party's most chauvinistic propagandist. John Maclean led the outcry in Scotland. 'Our first business', he said, 'is to hate the British capitalist system'. Blame for the war was unclear but the motive force was the 'profit of the plundering class....It is mere cant to talk of German militarism when Britain has led the world in the navy business.' Maclean urged Socialists to develop 'class patriotism' and ignore the 'moral' excuses put forward to explain a Capitalist war.¹⁵

From September onwards opinion within the party fragmented. In an attempt to atomise the opposition five regional conferences were held in February 1915 as opposed to the usual national gathering.¹⁶ Prior to these conferences the Central branch, composed largely of 'old guard' members, circularised the branches with a statement of the Allied case which affirmed the inevitability of England's intervention and stressed that liberty and democracy were at stake. It appealed to members not to vote for any resolutions which might be viewed as anti-patriotic and therefore retard the party's influence. Fairchild and Fineberg, the London Executive members, protested bitterly at this attempt to influence opinion. The aggregate voting of the regional conferences revealed a divided and confused party, with pro- and anti-war elements very evenly divided. In Glasgow and

London the oppositionists held the upper hand. The conference at Leeds revealed overwhelming support for a pro-war policy, leading Arthur Gardiner of Huddersfield to suggest red, white and blue ribbons for the delegates. Lancashire, the traditional centre of Social Democracy, followed Hyndman but the more recent adherents to the party, like the Openshaw branch, opposed the war. On the crucial issue of its policy towards the war the party rejected both nationalist and internationalist resolutions in favour of a compromise which called for a speedy termination of the war. A Central Hackney resolution regretting the statement on recruiting was carried 59-56 but a demand for the statement's immediate withdrawal was defeated 67-57. More confusing still, an Aberdeen resolution calling upon the party to take no part in recruiting meetings under any conditions was voted through by 76-62. Further uncertainty was demonstrated by a vote of 73-53 in favour of the citizen army followed by approval of a Huddersfield amendment which deleted the same and substituted a declaration of anti-militarism. A substantial minority of the party obviously had no clearly defined position but overall the internationalists fared slightly better than their opponents, and the overt nationalists received a resounding rebuff when a Central branch resolution urging a fight 'to the point when the Central European autocracies will have been destroyed' was lost 81-46. The internationalists got a 5-4 majority on the Executive, but the Hyndmanites con-

trolled Justice and consolidated themselves in the Central branch - an uneasy peace prevailed.

Shortly after these regional meetings a Conference of Allied Socialists was held in London. Litvinov, the Bolshevik representative in London, attended and argued for a united front of Allied and enemy Socialists against the war. His views were anathema to the majority of delegates and after continual interruptions Litvinov walked out. The Kentish Town branch of which Chicherin, later Soviet foreign minister, was a member protested that the Conference represented an attempt to destroy the International and deplored BSP participation in such a gathering.¹⁸ This view was common currency amongst the European left, which now attempted to reorganise the International via a Conference at Zimmerwald in September 1915. Bruce Glasier for the ILP and Fairchild for the BSP were deputed to attend but were refused passports. The influence of this gathering of minority Socialist opinion on the war was negligible, but it marked a significant step towards the formation of the Third International and signalled a rapprochement of centre and left elements in opposition to the majority on the right. The Zimmerwald Manifesto blamed the war on imperialism and capitalist greed:

In this unbearable situation we...who stand not
on the ground of national solidarity with the

exploiting class but on the ground of the international solidarity of the proletariat and of class struggle, have assembled to retie the torn threads of international relations and to call upon the working class to recover itself and fight for peace.¹⁹

It stopped short of supporting Lenin's call for revolutionary war, but he saw it as the first step towards the success of his cause.

The substance of Zimmerwald was accepted both by the ILP and the BSP, in spite of the fact that it was diametrically opposed to official Labour Party policy. There was a move within the ILP to break with the Labour Party, but this was rejected at its Newcastle Conference in 1916. Yet the ILP was able to reconcile its differences in the interests of organisational unity; this the BSP found impossible. Hyndman and his followers rejected the Zimmerwald resolution as totally unacceptable. 'The group around Fairchild committed to the rebirth of the Second International, firmly opposed to the creation of a fresh organisation, found itself sympathetic to the views expressed, yet hostile to key practical proposals.'²⁰ John Maclean and his supporters were enthusiastic. By this stage of the war it was possible to discern four distinct strands of opinion within the BSP.

Hyndman had often predicted that a 'shock from without'

was needed to precipitate the triumph of Socialism, but his great fear was that this would come in the form of bloody revolution. He envisaged that the exigencies of wartime would increasingly force the Government to adopt Socialist measures and to intervene in industry. The work of the War Emergency Workers' National Committee, established within twenty-four hours of the declaration of war, seemed to encourage the prospect of social change and Hyndman, as the BSP representative, devoted a tremendous amount of time and energy to its work. It allowed him that direct engagement with national problems for which he had always longed and which his failure to win Burnley had prevented. His efforts here served to emphasise the increasing moderation of his Socialism, and his close collaboration with Sidney Webb on the Committee demonstrated still further his move away from revolutionary Marxism. The defence of workers' interests in wartime was accompanied by ceaseless propaganda for an Allied victory. Convinced of the justice of the Allied cause Hyndman also felt that an identification with the anti-war movement would irreparably damage the Socialists' standing in the country. He thus spoke of the Allies fighting 'a people's war', a war of liberation, a war for the workers, and moreover a war which would signal the triumph of Socialism. In an attempt to justify his pro-war policy, Hyndman collaborated with Bax in an article for the English Review which sought to reconcile Marxist theory with support for the war.

Interestingly, Hyndman modified his hitherto materialist view of history to argue that the common Marxist interpretation of the war as capitalist in its origins was 'extreme doctrinaire dogma'. Bax of course had always expounded a more wide-ranging Marxist philosophy and the two suggested that mental and psychological factors had been as instrumental as the economic factor in the outbreak of this war. 'All wars are no more of necessity economic wars', they said, 'than all internal conflicts are of necessity class conflicts.' They attributed the European conflict to 'the final effort of Prussian Militarism to retain its predominance at home by conquest and annexation abroad.' This was a foreign war to defend the position of the Prussian Junkers in Germany against the increasing influence of both capitalists and Socialists. Their victory would threaten both democracy and Socialism, whereas their defeat might well lead to Socialist triumph.²¹

Bax's support for Hyndman's position illustrated the extent to which the internationalist cause had collapsed in the early months of the war, for he had been one of the leading critics of Hyndman's utterances on foreign policy.²² Yet they were not mere jingoes or Germanophobes as their critics suggested. In the same article they paid tribute to the efforts of German Socialists over the years to prevent war, pointed out that Bebel and others had always warned that they were not strong enough to prevent war, and saluted Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and others who had opposed this

war. The present success of Prussian militarism, they argued, did not rule out Germany's progress towards Socialism; indeed, defeat in the war might hasten it. Hyndman made a similar point in a letter to The Times²³ and early in 1915 refused to join an 'Anti-German League', saying that 'Nations cannot afford to indulge in permanent hatred.'²⁴

Hyndman's nationalism was accentuated as the war progressed and his attitude to Germany hardened as the casualty lists lengthened and the outcome became increasingly uncertain. Yet his was what might be termed a sane patriotism, which never obscured his fundamental Socialist beliefs. He was supported by the bulk of the 'old Guard' and, with differing emphases, by many of the rank and file. Alf Barton of Sheffield spoke for many in a pamphlet published in 1915, when he argued strongly that the war was capitalist in its origin: 'The German Empire is, in the main, fighting to obtain commercial and economic advantage; the British Empire is fighting to maintain commercial and economic advantage.'²⁵ Thus far he disagreed with Hyndman, but Barton too characterised the anti-war position as absurd. 'The British Empire, he said, 'is Capitalism tempered by Democracy....The German Empire is Capitalism hardened by Militarism'. Although Britain's political liberty was by no means great it was a precious possession which must be fought for, against their own government if necessary but even more so against foreign domination. Thereafter Barton supported the Hyndmanite

perspective - the war provided the opportunity for a mental revolution which would pave the way for Socialism. Socialists should seize that opportunity whilst defending class interests and political liberty:

Whatever the defects of the Allies, it is evident that Prussianism is Capitalism, or Class Rule, in its most virulent form, and a victory for German arms would...put still further off the advent of Liberty and **Social Justice**.²⁶

Bert Killip of Leeds argued in similar vein,²⁷ and all supporters of this position repeatedly reiterated that they had protested against the Boer War in the interests of small nationalities and therefore to be consistent they had to support the Allies against the German violation of Belgium.

The 'sane patriotic' position then supported the war and wished it brought to a speedy conclusion via an Allied victory, but with no annexations or calls for vengeance. Its proponents hoped for Socialist gains from the war, indeed foresaw the increasing socialisation of the means of production and distribution as a result of the war. Support for the war would, they thought, strengthen their position in the public eye as the lessons of the war were driven home. The majority of this tendency supported participation in the recruiting campaign, both as a means of avoiding conscription and as an opportunity to publicise the Socialist

case. J. Hunter Watts even recruited a special 'Comradeship Company' of Socialists to serve in the trenches.²⁸

There were a number of Socialists, both inside and outside the BSP, who felt that the position outlined above was too weak an espousal of the British cause. They wanted a war to the finish, an outright victory over Germany, but initially more importantly the ultra-patriotic element wished to establish a clear pro-war alternative to the pacifist elements associated with the ILP. The leading light in this operation was Victor Fisher of the BSP, and on the 16 April 1915, at a meeting held at his house, a body calling itself the Socialist National Defence Committee was established. In Fisher's words the SNDC was concerned 'to counter-act the peace at any price policy of the anti-national elements in the Socialist and Labour movements in the country.'²⁹ Its committee included A.M. Thompson and Robert Blatchford of the Clarion, its supporters Dan Irving, Bert Killip, Ben Tillet, J. J. Terrett and Will Thorne of the BSP. A number of right wing Labour M.P.s such as John Hodge and G. H. Roberts, along with J. A. Seddon, ex-T.U.C. Chairman, featured prominently in the early activities. More significantly, the SNDC was closely associated with Lord Milner who saw it and its successor, the British Workers' League, as a vehicle for transforming his views on Empire and Socialism into political reality. Milner felt that some form of social reform, 'Gas and Water Socialism',

was needed to preserve the health and intelligence of the masses who were vital to the strength of the nation and thus the Empire. With the outbreak of war he was concerned to counteract the pacifist sentiment of the ILP within the Labour Party and to line up the patriotic Labour elements in favour of a programme of national service, limited social reforms and Imperial unity. To this end he saw Fisher as a valuable ally and, as J. O. Stubbs has pointed out, Milner manipulated the SNDC and later the BWL in his own interests.³⁰

The SNDC held its first public meeting in London on 21 July 1915. Hyndman spoke for the Committee on this occasion but, as Tsuzuki demonstrates, he was never officially associated with its activities and soon distanced himself from it. At this stage, however, he sympathised with its attempts to associate Socialism with the national cause, and most importantly he did not dissociate himself from the events of that day. A number of the BSP opposition attended the meeting, and E. C. Fairchild suggested a negotiated peace and the re-establishment of contacts between British and German Socialists. At that violence erupted; soldiers were used as stewards, along with several members of the largely pro-war Central branch of the BSP. Albert Inkpin, the party secretary, was beaten about the head and ejected from the meeting with blood streaming down his face. Many others were similarly treated, and Fairchild caustically

remarked that 'The Socialist National Defence Committee... will be remembered as the first Socialist body which, in any country, employed soldiers to suppress social-democratic opinion.'³¹ Within a short space of time the SNDC abandoned all pretence of presenting a distinctively Socialist viewpoint. It supported the candidature of C. B. Stanton, an ex-SDFer, in opposition to the official Labour candidate in the Merthyr by-election of November 1915, an election which Stanton won. Evolving, via the British Workers' League, into the National Democratic Party it became avowedly critical of Socialism, and many of its leading spokesmen ended their political careers in the Tory Party. Most of the BSP members who had participated in its early activities soon dissociated themselves from the organisation, but J. F. Green, ex-SDF treasurer, and J. J. Terrett remained members and so too did Edward Hartley. Hartley, a veteran Clarion Vanner, had obviously imbibed much of Blatchford's philosophy, a fact which he admitted at a public meeting of the Bradford BSP in August 1915. It did seem strange, said Hartley, after 40 years of advocating peace to be moving a resolution which favoured a complete and crushing victory over Germany and which urged the immediate enlistment of all men. 'But willy-nilly, we were at war, and to prate about peace and talk about the terms of peace before we knew which side was going to win was a waste of time'.³² Their task was to ensure an Allied victory. The meeting was accompanied by the singing

of the National Anthem and the music of the Royal Artillery band, and it was notable for a furious attack by Ben Tillett on the 'cowards' and 'poltroons' who were betraying their country. 'He was a revolutionary', said Tillett, 'but he yielded to no man as a lover of his country.'³³ Tillett's statement was indicative of the SNDC's stance, which can best be summed up in Blatchford's phrase 'Britain for the British'. The significance of the SNDC, as H. W. Lee later remembered, was that it drove many of the neutral or uncertain elements within the BSP towards the opposition camp. The association of a number of leading Social-Democrats with the Committee in its early days, and particularly their presence on the platform at the Queen's Hall meeting in July, alienated many members from the pro-war group. They failed to differentiate between the 'sane' and 'ultra' patriotic elements.³⁴

A further wedge was driven between the pro and anti-war elements by the vicious attacks of the Hyndmanites on their critics. Although Hyndman's views on the war were not as extreme as sometimes depicted he demonstrated an overwhelming intolerance of those who disagreed with him. Opponents were smeared as German agents, traitors to the Allied cause and, as Raymond Challinor comments, 'merely to express doubts was sufficient to arouse the anger of Hyndman and his group.'³⁵ Leading members of the party found themselves shadowed by the police and suspected

supporters of Hyndman of acting as informers. In Sheffield there was uproar when Hunter Watts and Russell Smart attempted to recruit members for the armed forces by a combination of bribes and intimidation. Smart was eventually expelled for his activities. Two incidents in particular aroused resentment. In March 1915 Hyndman wrote to L'Homme Enchaîné, a French newspaper published by Georges Clemenceau, accusing the ILP of being financed in its anti-war activities by the Germans. The BSP executive dissociated itself from his views and several branches protested. When the editor of the Glasgow Forward challenged the BSP rank and file to declare their position John Maclean wrote a long letter denouncing Hyndman for betraying the BSP and attempting to establish 'a British Socialist Autocracy' with himself as 'autocrat-in-chief'.³⁶ The second incident was the publication of an article in Justice entitled 'Who and What is Peter Petroff?' Petroff, a veteran of the 1905 Russian Revolution and an active opponent of Hyndman within the BSP, was at this time a close collaborator of Maclean in Glasgow. The article was a vindictive attempt to stifle opposition, for it incited the authorities to arrest and deport Petroff, and there could be little doubt of the fate awaiting him in Russia. Maclean again sprang to the attack, bitterly criticising Justice and asking 'Who and what are Messrs Hyndman, Bax, Fisher, Hunter Watts, Gorle, etc?'³⁷ Control of Justice was, in fact, the main bone of contention, causing

bitter disputes. Lee's refusal to moderate its patriotic line led Zelda Kahan to warn that the opposition would have 'nothing to do with the paper and even...hinder its circulation.'³⁸ In September 1915 Maclean launched his own paper, the Vanguard, as the organ of the Glasgow District Council of the BSP. This was the first open breach with the Hyndmanites. When the Vanguard was suppressed in January 1916 E. C. Fairchild started the Call in London to expound the opposition cause. Yet their position was not clear and their line on the war indecisive.

The bulk of the anti-war elements within the BSP adopted the centrist position outlined earlier. At the outbreak of war they were confused and hesitant and they remained diffident about adopting an unequivocal anti-war stance. Thus, although analysing the war as a capitalist war, they were reluctant to draw the conclusion that it was no concern of the working class, and they were against any direct action which might imperil national defence. E. C. Fairchild warned that 'all action should be rigorously avoided, calculated to endanger national defence;'³⁹ Joe Fineberg argued that a German victory would be disastrous for Europe, and H. Alexander claimed that his internationalism 'did not prevent him being a nationalist, prepared to defend his own country.'⁴⁰ They looked to the International Socialist Bureau to use its influence to bring about peace at the earliest opportunity, a somewhat naive attitude in

view of the fact that Vandervelde, the chairman of the ISB, was a member of the Belgian cabinet and had made it plain that he would not convene a meeting of the ISB as long as German soldiers remained on Belgian soil. The International was effectively a hostage of the Allies, hence the Zimmerwald Conference in 1915. BSP reaction to Zimmerwald was equivocal; the Executive hoped that it would prompt the ISB into action, but Kahan criticised it as 'international impossibilist' for failing to consider the question of how to stop wars under the existing capitalist system. Fairchild was adamantly opposed to the Bolshevik proposal for the establishment of a new Socialist International, and he spoke for the majority of the BSP centre. In essence 'it saw the path to peace as coming through an agreement of socialist parties to work in unity for this objective, and made its own adoption of an anti-war campaign contingent upon such an agreement.'⁴¹ Before taking a stand the BSP wanted the withdrawal of all troops from occupied territories which, says Challinor, 'placed the onus upon German Social Democrats to force the German government to make the first move.'⁴² This was simply not feasible and it meant that the centre reverted to that state of immobility which had often characterised the SDF. They would propagandise against the war and for an early negotiated peace but they did not consider direct action against the war. In the last analysis theirs was a pacifist opposition, and Lenin's assessment of them as 'confused and vacillating elements' was essentially accurate.

The Bolshevik position that only the overthrow of capitalism could secure a lasting peace and that Socialists should undertake revolutionary work leading to civil war found few supporters in Britain. Unaffected by military conflict on our soil British Socialists saw little relevance in Lenin's concept of 'revolutionary defeatism'. The major exception to this was John Maclean, who adopted a line closer to Lenin than that of any other British Socialist. Indeed, he was some way to the left even of prominent émigrés like Kahan and Rothstein, who at that time approximated to the Mensheviks position. Maclean was exceptional amongst British Social-Democrats in his attempts to integrate Marxist theory with workers' immediate struggles. He saw wartime developments, particularly on Clydeside, as providing fertile opportunities for revolutionary agitation. The grievances of engineering workers over dilution, the increased industrial discipline of wartime, anger at price and rent rises, were seen by Maclean as providing the opportunity for a Socialist appeal closely attuned to the immediate concerns of the workers. As Gallacher remarked the Clyde, perhaps alone in Britain, was not taken completely by surprise by the outbreak of war. Socialists of the ILP, SLP, the Clarion and the SDF had propagandised ceaselessly in the years before 1914, preaching an anti-war and anti-militarist message which found a receptive audience. When war erupted anti-war speakers were at least tolerated and, as the war dragged on, increasingly appreciated. Maclean therefore

hoped to connect working-class economic grievances to Marxist theory and to turn the Clyde Workers' Committee towards a revolutionary strategy. To this end he worked like a man possessed, and 'Maclean's classes, his agitation, constituted the elemental driving force behind the whole revolutionary movement on the Clyde.'⁴³

The activities of Maclean and his followers on Clydeside lend the lie to the illusion that it was the ILP which played the leading role in the anti-war campaign. Indeed the ILP's position was often ambiguous and its leading members frequently dodged the issue. At both a national and local level there were very few members of the ILP who adopted a clear-cut pacifist position, and there was 'a professional, middle-class, temper to this group which was composed largely of writers, journalists, academics and doctors.'⁴⁴ Harry McShane's comment on the Glasgow ILP, that its members 'didn't know where they were, and concentrated on the issue of secret diplomacy until conscription gave them something they could really fight on',⁴⁵ is appropriate for the party as a whole. Its national spokesmen, Hardie, MacDonald and Jowett, supported national defence and wavered between settling the war as quickly as possible and urging the necessity of an Allied victory. Their speeches in their parliamentary constituencies often differed dramatically from those made elsewhere. Keir Hardie's famous article, 'We Must see the War Through, but denounce

Secret Diplomacy', perhaps summed up their attitude. The BSP centre was far less equivocal over the question of recruiting, and its line on the war hardened much earlier and was much firmer than that of the ILP, whilst the left around Maclean was uncompromising. Maclean's role has been much underplayed, largely in the interests of Labour orthodoxy but also, on the left, because of his later refusal to join the Communist Party. Tom Bell, Gallacher and, more recently, Raymond Challinor and James Hinton have attributed the leadership of the anti-war campaign on Clydeside to the SLP and the Shop Stewards' Movement.⁴⁶ This is simply untrue. Their attitude was largely syndicalist, their politics submerged in workshop struggles. Both McShane and Harry Pollitt remembered that the war was rarely mentioned, even in the munitions factories, and the Clyde Workers' Committee concentrated on the threat to trade union conditions.⁴⁷ Only Maclean and the BSP in Glasgow applied a Marxist analysis and gave a concrete militant lead; for Maclean the political issue was central, the need for an organised political party paramount. The SLP still tended to ultra-left sectarianism, and on one occasion Petroff and James MacDougall were ejected from a meeting of the Clyde Workers' Committee for attempting to raise the political issues of war and conscription. That Maclean posed the real danger to the war effort was well recognised by the authorities, who arrested him in October 1915, and again in February 1916, when he

was sentenced to three years imprisonment.

State action against the anti-war elements within the Socialist movement hastened the crisis between the patriotic leadership of the BSP and its anti-war opponents. The 1916 Conference of the BSP met at Salford on the 23rd and 24th April, in the aftermath of the arrests on Clydeside and the general imposition of military and industrial conscription. It was attended by 106 delegates representing 91 branches, and held in an atmosphere of intimidation. Fearing proceedings under the Defence of the Realm Act the Executive recommended that the Conference be held 'in camera' so that delegates should feel free to express their views. This was hotly opposed by Hyndman and his followers and in the ensuing debate tempers became frayed. H. W. Alexander, the treasurer, in a speech supporting the Executive resolution, pointed to Hyndman, Irving and others and declared that 'Colleagues of these men are responsible for Scotland Yard dogging the footsteps of men like myself.'⁴⁸ Hyndman attempted to reply but was shouted down, in spite of Fairchild's efforts to secure him a hearing, and the Executive's recommendation was voted in by 76 votes to 28. Thereupon, in accordance with a pre-arranged plan, 22 pro-war delegates representing 18 branches walked out of the Conference.⁴⁹ 'This action called forth a spontaneous demonstration from the great body of the delegates, who stood upon the chairs and tables cheering and singing "The Red Flag" as the

dissentient delegates walked out.'⁵⁰ Although some of the dissentients later returned to take part in the debates they were overwhelmingly defeated on all resolutions and in the subsequent Executive elections Internationalists took all the seats but one. 'Hyndman and the old Social-Democratic leadership had, in effect, been expelled from the organisation they had largely built.'⁵¹

Hyndman and his supporters adjourned to the Deansgate Hotel, Manchester, where they announced the formation of a National Socialist Advisory Committee. In June this was transformed into the National Socialist Party and Hyndman, at the age of 74, set out to 'begin the Socialist movement here anew'. The title of the new party expressed his conviction that 'both the B.S.P. and the I.L.P. have cut themselves adrift from the people of these islands.'⁵² With Joseph Burgess, ex-president of the Bradford ILP, as its national organiser the NSP claimed 43 branches by the end of the year. Its main advantage was its continued control of Justice, but the BSP held on to the party headquarters and retained a substantial majority of the branches and membership. Hyndman felt that this was accidental, that the bulk of his supporters were at the front or otherwise involved in the war effort, and that he would soon be able to resurrect the strength of the old SDF. He was to be disappointed. The bulk of his support came from the 'old guard', long-serving and aging members of the SDF, and this

was true of all parts of the country.⁵³ The Executive of the new party consisted almost entirely of veterans; Lee, Thorne, Irving, Stokes, Hunter Watts, Jones and others. New blood was strikingly absent in the leadership. Regionally the picture was confused. East London and Glasgow were strongholds of the BSP, but Hyndman retained strong support in the Central London branch and North-West Ham. Previous centres of SDF activism such as Nottingham, Northampton and Reading remained largely loyal to Hyndman, as did the largest branch in Lancashire, Burnley and its near neighbour Nelson. In Yorkshire the two most prominent BSP members, Bert Killip and E. R. Hartley, were both pro-war. Killip remained in the Hyndman camp but Hartley was of the ultra-patriotic persuasion and joined Fisher's British Workers' League. He died at the beginning of 1918, but his defection and Killip's support of Hyndman deprived the BSP of much of its already limited support in the county. The regional conference at Leeds in 1915 had already demonstrated overwhelming support for the war, with only Arthur Gardiner of Huddersfield outspoken in the anti-war cause. He and Fred Shaw ensured a strong Huddersfield branch of the BSP after the split and there remained small branches at Birkenshaw, Bradford, and Elland, one in Leeds and an active branch in Sheffield. The BSP Conference in 1917 reported a total loss of 23 branches, but a number of these were divided on the issue and minorities immediately reformed

their branches. Additionally, the Jewish Social-Democratic organisation, with two London branches and further bases in Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow, affiliated to the BSP. Certainly the BSP emerged from the split with the larger number of branches, but it must be remembered that the party as a whole was already something of a declining force. From a claimed 40,000 members in 1912 the BSP had slumped to less than 10,000 paying members by the outbreak of war. The vicissitudes of wartime led to a further diminution of numbers and at the 1917 Conference the party could only boast 6,435 paying members. As the NSP never rose above 2,000 members the Social-Democratic tradition in British politics was obviously a much reduced force.

The First World War was not, of itself, the cause of the schism within the BSP. It brought to a head long simmering differences of opinion, differences which had erupted in the early years of the twentieth century with the formation of the SLP and SPGB, which had threatened to split the party again during the long-running controversy over 'the big navy', and which had been accentuated by the accession of new elements to the SDF at the formation of the BSP. Fainsod's appraisal of the effect of war on the Second International serves as an appropriate comment on the BSP:

The World War marked the end of an era in the history of labour and socialist internationalism. The schism which had been dimly foreshadowed by the internal disagreement in the pre-war International had at last matured. The World War was not responsible for the cleft, except in a very proximate sense. The war merely accelerated a process of dissolution which was implicit in the incompatible positions of Right, Center, and Left Wing Socialists.⁵⁴

However, the Salford Conference of 1916 was not the final chapter in the history of Social-Democracy in Britain. At Zimmerwald the Centre and Left had combined to oppose the patriotic or Right wing elements. Similarly in this country the group around Fairchild had allied itself with Maclean's left wing faction to defeat Hyndman. The jailing of Maclean and Petroff meant that leadership of the BSP after the split passed to the London men, the inheritors of the pre-war 'Internationalist' mantle. They still looked to a restored International Socialist Bureau to instigate a negotiated peace, and they determined to remain affiliated to the Labour Party despite its support for the wartime coalition government. In essence the new BSP leaders were reaffirming the orthodox tenets of the Social-Democratic tradition which Hyndman and his followers had implicitly abandoned. Convinced that the party, as yet, lacked the

mass base necessary for any practical action to achieve Socialist objectives, they maintained the essentially propagandist stance which had characterised the SDF and regarded their main task as educating the workers. In Kendall's words, they visualised revolution 'as a spontaneous upsurge of the masses sparked off like an explosion by the unendurable pressure of economic and political conditions on a waking population already prepared by social democratic propaganda.'⁵⁵ Their opposition to the war remained of a pacifist nature and they made no attempt to cause political unrest. This is not to denigrate the BSP contribution to the anti-war campaign. At one time 4 members of its Executive were imprisoned, as were three prominent émigrés, Petroff, Askew and Kehrhahn. The Huddersfield branch alone had 25 members in prison at one stage.⁵⁶ Yet their opposition to the war, and more importantly the nature of that opposition, allowed them to draw closer to the ILP, and in August 1916 a United Socialist Council was convened. The BSP was once more attempting the middle road, but its inability to choose between participation in the political process and genuine revolutionary activity again left it floundering and open to criticism from both left and right. Moreover, it was very susceptible to pressure from outside forces, and the revolution in Russia in 1917 influenced the party in new directions.

The February Revolution in Russia was universally welcomed by the Labour and Socialist Movement. Majority Labour opinion hoped that it would bring about a more effective prosecution of the war effort, whilst the downfall of Tsarism removed the misgivings of many about the British alliance with Russia. They could now genuinely claim that the war was one in defence of democracy and the rights of small nations. The Socialists hailed the Revolution as a triumph for the cause of democracy and hoped for a knock-on effect here, and they also believed that it would provide new impetus for a negotiated and early end to the war. In April the BSP Conference declared its 'profound admiration' for the revolutionary initiative of the Russian working class and passed the following resolution.

The Conference pledges itself and the Party to act in the spirit of the Russian Revolution by endeavouring to arouse the British working class to a sense of the despotism and militarism which are growing up in this country, and by redoubling its energy in an agitation for the restoration of the International, and for the speedy termination of the war on terms involving no annexations, and no humiliation to any country.⁵⁷

But what did the BSP mean by its promise 'to act in the spirit of the Russian Revolution'? Nothing the party or its

Executive did suggested that they envisaged any form of direct action here. Moreover, the resolution again demonstrated the predominance of the Centre in its call for a restoration of the International and a negotiated peace. The rhetoric of revolution belied the essential moderation of the party's stance, and this impression was reinforced at the famous Leeds Convention of 3 June 1917.

The initiative for Leeds, called 'to follow Russia', came from the United Socialist Council. Some 3,500 delegates hailed the Russian Revolution in enthusiastic fashion and talked wildly of a British sequel. Diverse shades of opinion were able to declare their support for revolution, Philip Snowden talking of painting Britain red, W. C.

Anderson urging the formation of 'Councils of Workmen^s and Soldiers/Delegates' and Robert Williams favouring 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. But, as Beatrice Webb noted, 'they were swayed by emotions.'⁵⁸ Beneath the rhetoric and bravado what united the heterogeneous elements was pacifism and the desire to end the war. The Provisional Committee's instructions to the Councils which were to be set up were scarcely revolutionary. They were concerned with safeguarding working-class rights during wartime, with uniting working-class organisations. W. C. Anderson, who sponsored the resolution in favour of establishing such councils, saw them as preparing for rebuilding after the war and even talked of getting government support. Thus they

were not intended to be Soviets in the Russian sense; indeed British Socialists knew next to nothing about conditions in Russia. Thus, to echo Stephen White, the Workmen's and Soldiers' Council movement 'was in its essence an organisation formed in order to press for a negotiated settlement of the war rather than for revolutionary social change or "dual power".'⁵⁹

The BSP later claimed that if other organisations had displayed the same spirit and enthusiasm as itself, the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils would have been far more successful.⁶⁰ Certainly the ILP's was the dominant voice at the Convention, with three times as many delegates as the BSP and a similar preponderance on the Provisional Committee, but there is no evidence to suggest that the outcome of the gathering would have been significantly different if the situation had been reversed. The Convention took place less than two months after the BSP Conference and nothing had happened to alter its perspective. As White points out, 'No BSP speaker suggested that it might be possible to end an imperialist war only through socialist revolution.'⁶¹ Common to both BSP and ILP was the view that the immediate question was to press for an honourable peace on the lines set forth by the Russian Provisional Government. Industrial and social problems could be left until after the war.

A challenge to this perspective emerged as the situation

in Russia was clarified, and here the role of the émigrés in the BSP was crucial. They possessed, in Kendall's phrase, 'revolutionary authenticity',⁶² and were able to influence the membership because of that. In July four Russian delegates arrived in Britain to establish contacts with the British Socialist movement. Chicherin and B. Kahan, uncle of Zelda, were on the reception committee. Thenceforward links multiplied and one consequence was the introduction of Bolshevik ideas to a wider audience. This coincided with the release of Maclean from jail at the end of June. He found allies in Tom Quelch and Theodore Rothstein, and they began to push for a more activist policy. The BSP was urged to participate more actively in the Shop Stewards Movement, to translate economic grievances into revolutionary political demands. Rothstein argued that it was possible to organise the masses for war resistance via a general strike in the munitions factories. The debate assumed dramatic relevance with the actuality of the October Revolution.

The Bolshevik coup d'état made them the single most important factor in the international Socialist movement. 'It changed the outlook of the whole world movement. "The Revolution" was no longer a distant dream; it had begun!'⁶³ As with the February Revolution enthusiasm was not confined to the revolutionary left. At the Labour Party Conference in January 1918 there was spontaneous singing of the 'Red Flag', cheers at the mention of Trotsky's name and an ovation for

Litvinov. A Labour Leader editorial proclaimed that 'the time is now ripe for the democracies to unitedly rise and sweep their stupid and incompetent governors aside and take the settlement of the war into their own hands.'⁶⁴ Such emotions did not generate any action; the feeling of the Labour Party and the bulk of the ILP was that one might legitimately defend revolution in Russia whilst still supporting reform in Britain, where conditions were very different. Thus all sections of the Movement participated in the 'Hands off Russia' campaign, but the majority of Labour and Socialist opinion ignored the Bolshevik appeal for revolutionary mass action to bring about peace and foment revolution. But for many on the revolutionary left the Bolshevik Revolution had saved the honour of the Socialist movement. 'The sense of defeat and humiliation which had weighed us down since August 1914 was dissipated completely,' said T. A. Jackson. 'Now we were able to cast caution to the winds and go boldly over to the counter-attack.'⁶⁵ The Revolution opened their eyes to new possibilities; it heralded the general collapse of capitalism. Socialism was no longer something to be passively awaited but something to be fought for. Capitalism could be attacked at its weakest link by Socialists with the courage of their convictions. In Harry McShane's words, 'We had only known working-class revolt: now we could talk about working-class power.'⁶⁶

The British Socialist Party gave the Bolshevik Revolution

unanimous and unstinting support. It was welcomed by The Call⁶⁷ and formally endorsed by the Executive in January 1918. BSP connections with Russia were strengthened when Chicherin and Petroff were deported in January 1918, to assume prominent roles in the Revolutionary Government. Joe Fineberg also returned to Russia and he facilitated the arrival of Bolshevik propaganda in Britain. Theodore Rothstein became the chief Bolshevik agent in this country, acting as the conduit for funds from Russia to support the revolutionary movement here and arranging publication of Lenin's State and Revolution in November 1919. At the party's Leeds Conference in 1918 Fairchild declared that they would 'have to apply precisely the same methods as the Bolsheviks were applying in Russia. There would have to be a definite break with constitutional methods, and recourse to the revolutionary process.'⁶⁸ Yet his speech, and its overwhelmingly enthusiastic reception, disguised serious policy differences between those who wished to follow the Russian example and the more cautious elements who believed that there was no revolutionary road open to Britain in the foreseeable future. Fairchild belonged to the latter group. He wished to maintain affiliation to the Labour Party, which was 'the political movement of the working classes'. The BSP's task, he said, was still to build a strong party by educating the workers in Marxist principles, and this could best be done by maintaining close links with the ILP and the Labour Party. Maclean on the other hand

warned against sacrificing principles for unity. In his eyes the Labour Party was inextricably bound up with Capitalism, and the present upheavals in society gave them the opportunity to develop workers' class consciousness and sweep away the Labour Party. But on this question Maclean was isolated. The majority on the left supported affiliation. Fineberg accused its opponents of acting like a 'Jewish sect...Revolutionary Socialism was a grand faith to have but it was not our function to have it for ourselves.'⁶⁹ His views reflected a process of self-examination and re-appraisal within the BSP ranks.

One of the main effects of the Bolshevik Revolution was to influence BSP members to adopt a far more agitational role in the trade unions and Labour Party. Fred Shaw remarked that 'experience had taught him and others that instead of standing aloof from existing organisations, they should go into them' and win them for Marxism.⁷⁰ Political activity was no longer regarded as separate from industrial organisation and BSPers were active in the Shop Stewards Movement, which at the beginning of 1918 declared all-out opposition to the war. In the light of the Revolution many followed T. A. Jackson's example: 'I pulled my Marxism to pieces, examined every piece closely and critically in the light of objective practice... helped by the works of Lenin as they appeared in English.'⁷¹ This led them to a new appraisal of the state as an

instrument of class domination, whereas previously they had operated largely within the context of existing national political structures. It also emphasised the need for an immediate revolutionary strategy which accepted that Socialism was not guaranteed but had to be won: 'our Russian comrades have shown us that the working class...can, under the most trying and difficult circumstances, assume power and maintain it', said M. E. Quelch, and British Marxists should develop a similar 'sense of power'.⁷² They were led away from parliament as the main focus for their activities towards an acceptance of Lenin's strictures that it should be used to smash the system, to expose workers' illusions in parliamentary democracy. Similar arguments could be advanced for affiliation to the Labour Party. During the autumn and winter of 1918 Socialist unity once more appeared on the agenda, but now the BSP looked leftward, to the SLP. The two parties found common ground in the idea of Soviets springing up spontaneously from the revolutionary instincts of the masses. In January 1919 the Bolshevik call for the establishment of a Third International heralded a renewed struggle within the BSP, as Fairchild and Alexander led a small minority in continued support of the re-establishment of the Second International. The BSP Conference of April 1919 demonstrated conclusively that 'Sovietism' had captured the party. Fairchild and Alexander, protesting bitterly that the BSP was acting as though there had been neither parliament nor trade

unions in British history, left the party altogether. The Bolshevik Revolution had 'initiated the final stage in the decomposition of the Social Democratic tradition in Britain',⁷³ and the BSP's acceptance of the Soviet as the agency of the Socialist revolution meant 'the decisive break with the Social Democratic orthodoxy and constituted the ideological basis for the formation of a unified revolutionary party.'⁷⁴ Less than twelve months later the BSP fused into the new Communist Party of Great Britain.

NOTES

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3. M. Fainsod, International Socialism and the Great War, (1973 edition), p.10.
4. Ibid., p.17.
5. Joll, op.cit., pp.159-60.
6. Haupt, op.cit., p.221.
7. Jackson, Solo Trumpet, p.115.
8. Justice, 6 August 1914.
9. Quoted in Joll, op.cit., p.181.
10. BSP Conference Report, 1912, quoted in N. Milton, John Maclean, (1979), p.60.
11. W. Kendall, 'Russian Emigration and British Marxist Socialism', International Review of Social History, VOL.VIII, 1963, p.365.
12. Pierson, British Socialists, p.276.
13. Justice, 13 August 1914.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 17 September 1914.
16. At Glasgow, London, Bristol, Leeds and Manchester.
17. Leeds and District Weekly Citizen, 12 February 1915.
18. Justice, 15 April 1915.
19. The Zimmerwald Manifesto, quoted in Fainsod, op.cit., p.70.

20. Kendall, 'Russian Emigration and British Marxist Socialism', p.369.
21. H. M. Hyndman and E. B. Bax, 'Socialism, Materialism, and the War', English Review, XIX, December 1914, pp.52-69.
22. For Bax's attitude to the war see also his Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Mid and Late Victorian, pp.252-55.
23. The Times, 18 August 1914.
24. Justice, 6 May 1915.
25. A. Barton, The War: How It was made, who shall profit by it?, (1915).
26. Ibid.
27. See Leeds and District Weekly Citizen, 4 September 1914 and 12 February 1915.
28. Justice, 22 April 1915.
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31. Bradford Pioneer, 6 August 1915.
32. Yorkshire Observer, 7 August 1915.
33. Ibid.
34. Lee and Archbold, op.cit., pp.231-32.
35. Challinor, op.cit., p.165.

36. Milton, op.cit., p.88.
37. Justice, 6 January 1916.
38. Ibid., 8 July 1915.
39. Ibid., 28 October 1915.
40. BSP Conference Report, 1916, p.7.
41. Challinor, op.cit., p.164.
42. Ibid.
43. Kendall, The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, p.132.
44. J. A. Jowitt and K. Laybourn, 'War and Socialism: The Experience of the Bradford Independent Labour Party', The Journal of Regional and Local Studies, VOL 4, Part II, Autumn 1984, p.60.
45. H. McShane and J. Smith, Harry McShane, No Mean Fighter, (1978), p.64.
46. Tom Bell, John Maclean, (1944); W. Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, (1978 edition); Challinor, op.cit.; J. Hinton, The First Shop Stewards' Movement, (1973).
47. McShane and Smith, op.cit., p.77; H. Pollitt, Serving My Time, (1950), p.71.
48. Challinor, op.cit., p.165; See also Lee and Archbold, op.cit., p.237.
49. The branches were Aberdeen, Aspatia, Barking, Barry, Blaencyldach, Burnley, Cardiff, Carlisle, Central London, Enfield, Glasgow College, Methil, Nelson, Northampton, Nottingham, Reading, Southport, South-West Har
50. BSP Conference Report, 1916, p.3.

51. Pierson, British Socialists, p.280.
52. Justice, 8 June 1916.
53. See, for example, McShane and Smith, op.cit., p.65.
54. Fainsod, op.cit., p.224.
55. Kendall, The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, p.173.
56. BSP Annual Conference Report, 1917, The Huddersfield figures are quite startling for the No-Conscription Fellowship, whilst admitting its records were incomplete, estimated that 78 BSP members were imprisoned as conscientious objectors during the war. See The No-Conscription Fellowship, A Souvenir of its work during the years 1914-1919. (n.d.).
57. BSP Annual Conference Report, 1917, p.11.
58. B. Webb, Diaries 1912-24, p.88, quoted in S. White, 'Soviets in Britain: The Leeds Convention of 1917', International Review of Social History, XIX, 1974, p.176.
59. White, op.cit., p.192.
60. BSP Annual Conference Report, 1918, p.43.
61. White, op.cit., p.180.
62. Kendall, 'Russian Emigration and British Marxist Socialism', p.361.
63. Milton, op.cit., p.152.
64. Labour Leader, 7 February 1918.
65. Jackson, Solo Trumpet, p.139.
66. McShane and Smith, op.cit., p.94.
67. The Call, 29 November 1917.

68. BSP Conference Report, 1918.
69. Ibid., p.29.
70. Ibid., p.20.
71. T. A. Jackson, Manuscript Autobiography, p.262, the sequel to Solo Trumpet, quoted in MacIntyre, A Proletarian Science, p.23.
72. The Call, 14 February 1918.
73. Pierson, British Socialists, p.287.
74. Hinton, op.cit., p.306.

EPILOGUE.

The negotiations leading to the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain and the merger of the BSP into the new party have been well documented,¹ and fall outside the concerns of this thesis, but one point is worthy of some consideration. Walter Kendall has argued that the CPGB was an artificial creation imposed upon British Socialists by the Comintern at a time when the indigenous revolutionary movement was breaking out of the sectarian isolation which had retarded its development since the 1880s. Kendall sees John Maclean as the central figure in 'the formation of a native British Marxist tradition',² and Theodore Rothstein as the villain of the piece, taking advantage of Maclean's imprisonment to divert the BSP from a genuine revolutionary strategy into Comintern sectarianism. Raymond Challinor agrees with Kendall's attacks on Rothstein and also suggests that Rothstein misinformed Lenin as to the true situation in Britain. Indeed Challinor questions Rothstein's revolutionary credentials in an attempt to portray the SLP as the true originators of British Bolshevism and to downgrade the role of the BSP.³ How valid are these assertions?

In the first instance Kendall has a somewhat naive estimate of Scottish radical potential, both in 1915-16 and again from 1918-20. His suggestion that the British revolutionaries 'missed the boat' and failed to capitalise on their opportunities quite simply misjudges the

revolutionary potential of those years. The grievances of the workers were industrial and community-centred; they would accept Socialist leadership on those issues but did not connect them with opposition to the war. Indeed, as military victory became more certain opposition to the war became even more limited. Workers' demands were largely sectional; there was little agreement amongst the munitions workers, for example, let alone amongst the wider working-class, and very often agreements were reached on a plant by plant basis. Economic conditions were never as bad in Britain as in those countries where revolution did break out, and Britain was one of the victors in the armed conflict. Trade union officials were always able to divert working-class militancy into channels harmless to the system, whilst the authorities never lost the capacity nor the determination to govern. There was never any serious disaffection within the armed forces. Finally, the pre-requisite of a revolutionary transformation, the establishment of 'dual power' in the shape of soldiers' and workers' councils, was never a serious possibility as the events surrounding the Leeds Convention demonstrated. For these reasons I do not consider that a revolutionary situation existed in Britain either during or after the war. Nonetheless, defence of sectional interests can contain the potential for Socialist growth and certainly on Clydeside there developed a group of articulate Socialists, with Maclean the most prominent, which suggested the growth of a significant Socialist current based in part on workplace

organisation. Kendall suggests that Maclean's arrest in 1918 'shut down the dynamo'⁴ of revolutionary development and that thereafter Rothstein's influence was crucial.

The picture is confused by a lack of clear evidence but a number of points suggest themselves. Rothstein was certainly a late convert to Bolshevism; for much of the period he supported the Menshevik position, which opposed the war but doubted Russia's readiness for Socialism. His Essays on War and Peace, published by the BSP in 1917, called for a negotiated peace rather than an end to the war through Socialist revolution. He backed the entry of the Mensheviks into the Provisional Government and criticised the Leninite opposition to that. Rothstein was certainly to the right of Maclean prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, but Maclean was almost unique amongst British Socialists in his advocacy of 'revolutionary defeatism'. There was no clear picture of events in Russia and most British Socialists were reactive rather than creative in their policies. Rothstein's later career hardly validates Challinor's questioning of the legitimacy of his conversion.

Maclean himself was undoubtedly the inspiration of the BSP left and a major figure on Clydeside. His three years in jail after April 1916 are suggestive of Government awareness of his potential influence, and his appointment as Bolshevik Consul in Glasgow does not suggest that Lenin underestimated him either. Yet the left was not the major

force within the BSP prior to the Bolshevik Revolution. Fairchild and the centre predominated and their attempt to sustain the Social-Democratic tradition did not suggest a transformation of strategy or a major breakthrough from isolation. After the Bolshevik Revolution the ideological debate which had always characterised the SDF/BSP continued, to be won eventually by those favouring the Bolshevik model. That debate is the key to subsequent events. Kendall fails to see any continuity of tradition in the CPGB yet it was, in fact, firmly rooted in domestic experience. From the turn of the century the party, in common with all parties of the Second International, had experienced continuous debate over the role of the party. Breakaways by the SLP and SPGB had proved less successful than the SDF itself, but many remained to continue the debate. Kendall attacks the émigrés for their influence, but they were instrumental in challenging the Hyndmanites and Rothstein in particular provided that synthesis of theory and practice of which Maclean later proved to be the most able exponent. The industrial upheavals of 1910-20 produced a profound re-examination of ideology amongst many militants and it led them to question many fundamental Social-Democratic beliefs. Their search for an ideology was 'the fundamental dynamic of change in the British revolutionary movement in the decade preceding the formation of the Communist Party'⁵ and the influx of new elements into the BSP in 1911, as the Hyndmanites later regretted, eventually overwhelmed the Social-Democratic tradition. Their beliefs

were examined in the context of events, of which the Bolshevik Revolution was the most influential. To Socialists, devastated by the experiences of wartime, it provided new hope; it reawakened that apocalyptic vision, 'an ever present aspiration...to transcend the structure of British institutions',⁶ to which even Hyndman had been susceptible. As Challinor admits, 'The October Revolution endowed its custodians with immense prestige',⁷ and it reawakened that internationalism which had all but been destroyed in 1914. Revolutionaries looked to Russia for guidance and sought to emulate her example. One must agree with Hugo Dewar that those who came together to form the CPGB 'were for the most part deep-rooted in the native soil of the labour movement',⁸ and echo the sentiments of Arthur Horner:

Above all the Russian Revolution had inspired millions with the idea that the working people could take power and create a classless society. We did not think of Soviet Russia in those days as a State but as the first Socialist Government set up by the working class.⁹

Kendall is probably correct to assert that without Russian intervention there would have been no unity; the history of the British movement could not inspire confidence in the ability of its various sections to sink their differences. Yet for most revolutionaries association with the International was a matter for pride. 'It gave them a sense of strength

and assurance to be members of a world-wide organisation which was in power in Soviet Russia.'¹⁰ One must ask what would have happened without Russian insistence on unity, and the experience of the unity negotiations suggests that their intervention 'probably saved the revolutionary movement from a fragmentation far more sterile than anything for which the Communist Party itself' was responsible.¹¹ As one commentator observed, 'Had it not been for the Russian Revolution, Marxism in all probability would have dropped into the realm of rejected beliefs in the 1920s.'¹² If the BSP had been won for a revolutionary policy earlier and if Maclean had remained influential would this perspective have been radically different?

To present the BSP as a credible revolutionary instrument is invalid. The party was small in numbers, 59 branches being represented at its 1918 Conference including only ten from Scotland and twenty from London. It was hardly a party with a mass membership. In some areas the ILP was an obstacle to growth and this was certainly true in Glasgow where, by 1918, it had gained hegemony as a result of its campaigning on rents and housing. A revitalised Labour Party would prove a greater barrier to success elsewhere. There were moments of unrest and centres of discontent, but the task of transforming industrial upheaval into revolutionary political channels was beyond the task of the relatively few revolutionary Socialists. Challinor presents the SLP as a more credible alternative but

its membership was far smaller than that of the BSP and it was concentrated almost entirely in Scotland. Moreover it retained much of its sectarian nature; some of its members refused to welcome the Bolshevik Revolution as premature, many opposed affiliation to the Labour Party and remained aloof from the CPGB for that reason. Maclean could command a following amongst Socialists of all persuasions, but it would be true to say that he was an educator and propagandist rather than a revolutionary leader, simply because there was no revolution to lead. His rebuffs on the Clyde Workers' Committee when he attempted to link industrial discontent to opposition to the war prove this. He could not command a majority in the BSP until after the Bolshevik Revolution and then, with the majority, he 'did not in the least object to the BSP being remodelled on Bolshevik lines.'¹³ Revolutionary influence on Clydeside was limited; the so-called red base of Glasgow could only deliver 1 in 5 votes and one parliamentary seat to the Labour Party at the general election of December 1918. Maclean polled a very creditable 34.3% of the vote in the Gorbals as Labour candidate but thereafter, outside the Labour Party, his personal following declined.

Maclean's later career is controversial. Certainly he and Rothstein quarrelled, largely over the role which Maclean was required to play in the BSP. He and a number of others became disillusioned with BSP tactics and the party's leader-

ship, reflecting in part Maclean's distrust of London 'juntas'. Accusations that imprisonment had left him suffering from paranoia and delusions are dubious; his political statements remained coherent, as David Howell has demonstrated,¹⁴ but his perspective was simply not plausible. He too overestimated the radicalisation of the Scottish working class, thus attempting to form a separate Scottish Communist Party. His acceptance of much of the syndicalism he had once rejected and his attempts to gain support for one big union were not feasible in view of the post-war depression and the victimisation, following the 40 Hours Strike. Latterly Maclean was pre-occupied with the organisation of the unemployed, hardly the basis for a durable political movement. Neither Maclean nor the BSP provided the basis for a lasting revolutionary party, as Maclean's subsequent decline demonstrated. Their political space was limited by the Labour Party and they faced massive problems operating within a non-revolutionary situation. This indeed was the problem of the CPGB and not that of outside dictation and finance. What is important is that between 1914 and 1919 the Marxists of the BSP came to accept the Bolshevik viewpoint not because it was imposed upon them but because they accepted its validity. In so doing they abandoned Social-Democracy, the Marxism of the Second International. Its British founding father, Henry Mayers Hyndman, attempted to reinvigorate that tradition.

Some of Hyndman's political activities after his departure from the BSP 'bordered on the hysterical'.¹⁵ He joined the Morning Post's campaign to root out enemy spies and even volunteered his services to the police to investigate 'German spy waiters' in London. On discovering that Theodore Rothstein was employed by the Foreign Office as a Russian expert Hyndman took the necessary steps to ensure his dismissal. Personal pique allied to his intense patriotism ensured a continual barrage of invective against the BSP and ILP. His reaction to the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, allied to his wartime activities, revealed much about Hyndman's Socialism. He bitterly disowned Lenin's claim to have carried out a social revolution such as Marx contemplated, savaging the Bolsheviks as 'doctrinaire, premature and impossibilist.'¹⁶ In the first instance Hyndman was appalled at the Bolsheviks' unilateral declaration of peace at Brest Litovsk. He could never forgive them for weakening the Allied war effort. More fundamentally he attacked them on orthodox Marxist lines, arguing that Russia, being economically backward, had not attained the stage of highly developed capitalism, which alone made the advent of Socialism inevitable. They had skipped several stages in the slow advance of social evolution, claimed Hyndman, and 'Nothing will persuade me that people

can make twelve o'clock at eleven, in economics and sociology, by dogmatism, corruption and wholesale butchery.'¹⁷ The direct action of the Bolsheviks was, to Hyndman, simply a manifestation of anarchy, against which he had railed all his political life. The argument was certainly Marxist if, as Joseph Clayton pointed out, one treated Marx as an infallible guide and could claim to infallibly interpret his writings,¹⁸ but Hyndman was hardly consistent in his use of Marxist principles. He had already partially disavowed the materialist interpretation of history in his article with Bax in the early months of the war, and had argued in the case of Finland at least that Socialism could be achieved in an industrially backward country. Tsuzuki feels that 'In reality it was opportunism rather than theory that led Hyndman to attack the Bolshevik leaders, and the cause of his opportunism was his commitment to the Allied war effort.'¹⁹ But there was more to it than that!

Hyndman remained convinced that the advent of Socialism was closest in Britain, where capitalism was at its most highly developed. Indeed the European war had strengthened this conviction; the Government's recognition of the power of Labour, he said, 'had 'put the clock of progress on five-and-twenty years...We have entered the beginning of the transition period.'²⁰ George Bernard Shaw ridiculed Hyndman's attitude to the Bolsheviks in a review of The Evolution of Revolution. He had denounced the Germans for voting war

credits, now he denounced the Russians for surrendering 'when they were hopelessly bleeding to death'. The English arch-Marxist had 'been confronted with the fulfilment of all the articles of his religion' yet 'he out-Churchills Churchill in his denunciation of the Bolsheviks'. This was nothing but 'naive John Bullism' said Shaw. What did Hyndman expect the real revolution to be like? The real reason for Hyndman's anti-Bolshevism

seems to be that he has set his heart on England being the Holy Land of the Communist faith. John Bull again! Also, curiously enough, on the transition being a peaceful parliamentary one. The old Internationalist is a patriot at heart, the old revolutionist a pacifist.²¹

Shaw's assessment was accurate. Hyndman had shifted his outlook and altered his strategy to enter more fully into the political process. His remaining militancy had been dissipated by patriotism and he had adopted a Fabianlike faith in an evolutionary advance of Socialism via existing agencies, the evolution of revolution. Essentially this had been his outlook since the heady days of the 1880s, although Hyndman in common with most Social-Democrats retained enough of the apocalyptic vision to be swayed by events, for example the pre-war industrial militancy. Wartime, however, had removed even that vestige of revolutionary Socialism. Hyndman, unlike Morris, Bax and others, had never adopted Socialism as a

whole philosophy of life and remained committed to changes within existing systems, to a peaceful transition through democratisation of the existing order. His prediction of revolution in 1889 had failed to materialise and he had shifted to a long-term view of Socialist advance. 'Hyndman's Socialism was, despite its Marxist inspiration, much like Webb's Fabianism',²² utilitarian in concept.

Thus Hyndman, initially hostile to the affiliation of his new National Socialist Party to the Labour Party because of its anti-war elements, welcomed the new Labour constitution in 1918 because it definitely committed the party to Socialism. He regarded this as a vindication of SDF agitation over the years and the NSP affiliated immediately. Its aim was also to form a pro-Ally group within the Labour Party. In the 'khaki election' of December 1918 eleven NSP members stood as candidates on a programme 'to kill Bolshevism, Capitalism, Militarism' and six were successful.²³ Burnley at last returned a Labour M.P. in Dan Irving, some recompense for Hyndman's unsuccessful campaigns. The SDF²⁴ had, at last, won a place in the parliamentary Labour Party but Tsuzuki's assessment was all too accurate: 'its representatives were too old and too conservative to make very much impact with their ideas.'²⁵ Harry Lee, the party's historian, later argued that the SDF had changed places with the ILP to act as a Socialist ginger group within the Labour Party. If so it was singularly unsuccessful. They no longer claimed to be a

vanguard but rather a 'loyal soldier in the working class army.'²⁶ However, as rapidly became apparent, 'Having submerged itself in the working-class political movement, the SDF had lost any distinctive ideological basis for its existence and entered a course leading to its extinction.'²⁷

There is a touch of pathos to the last years of the Social-Democratic Federation. Its history is one of a declining and aging membership, its passage marked by the death of its stalwarts. Hyndman himself passed away on 22 November 1921, Irving in 1924, Bax in 1926. The organisation was in desperate financial straits and Justice ceased publication in January 1925, to be replaced by a monthly Social-Democrat. This struggled on until 1933. Branches were formed but many collapsed. The previously stalwart Edinburgh branch failed to raise a quorum at a meeting called for the purposes of winding it up.²⁸ SDFers were actively engaged in their unions and in the Labour Party and had little time to spare for the SDF, thus vindicating Irving's warning two decades previously. Potential new recruits saw little reason to join the Federation as well as the Labour Party, and those on the left gravitated to the ILP or the Communist Party as the new standard bearers of revolt. The speeches of its leaders could have been written 40 years previously, their theme still the education of the working class in the principles of Socialism, but they were now tinged with a touch of desperation in their claim that the Labour Party had in reality become a Social-

Democratic Party. They had become, says Clayton, 'part of the existing order, elements not of revolution but of stability.'²⁹ The Jubilee Conference of 1931, held in Bristol, suggested a revival but was in fact a celebration of past history, an occasion for reminiscing and self congratulation. Many of the delegates were 'pioneer leaders of the Labour Movement, some more than 70 years old'.³⁰ The following year the SDF could not afford to hold an Annual Conference,³¹ and in 1933 the affiliation fee to the Labour Party was paid on the reduced figure of 1,000 members. In 1935 there were serious discussions about the advisability of ceasing operations³² and thereafter the decline hastened. At the last a few veteran right-wing Labour Members of Parliament, including Thorne and Kennedy, met annually for a Hyndman Commemoration Dinner. The outbreak of war delivered the final blow to the party. Burnley, the sole remaining branch with a spark of life, suspended its activities and a special Executive meeting on the 12 October 1939 resolved to wind up the SDF immediately. This process was concluded in 1941, by which time the shares in the Twentieth Century Press had been sold, the last headquarters vacated, and the executive meetings concluded.

NOTES.

1. See Kendall, op.cit.; L. J. MacFarlane, The British Communist Party. Its Origin and Development until 1929, (1966); M. Woodhouse and B. Pearce, Essays on the History of Communism in Britain, (1975); H. Dewar, Communist Politics in Britain, (1976); J. Klugmann, History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, (1968).
2. Kendall, op.cit., p.194.
3. Challinor, op.cit., Chapter 10.
4. Kendall, op.cit., p.133.
5. J. Hinton and R. Hyman, Trade Unions and Revolution: The Industrial Politics of the Early Communist Party, (1975), p.14.
6. Pierson, British Socialists, p.289.
7. Challinor, op.cit., p.215.
8. Dewar, op.cit., p.14.
9. A. Horner, Incorrigible Rebel, (1960), p.38.
10. Macfarlane, op.cit., p.63.
11. J. Hinton, A review of Walter Kendall's The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921, in The Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, No.19, Autumn 1961.
12. Barltrop, op.cit., p.60.
13. Milton, op.cit., p.213.
14. D. Howell, The Lost Left, (1986), p.203.
15. Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, p.243.
16. H. M. Hyndman, The Evolution of Revolution, (1920), p.381.

17. H. M. Hyndman to G. B. Shaw, n.d.1920, in Pierson, British Socialists, p.300.
18. J. Clayton, The Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain, 1884-1924, (1926), p.186.
19. Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, p.239.
20. R. T. Hyndman, The Last Years of H. M. Hyndman, (1923), pp.31-2.
21. Ibid., pp.293-296.
22. Pierson, British Socialists, p.300.
23. Only four were sponsored directly by the NSP. See Appendix C.
24. The party reverted to its traditional name in 1920.
25. Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, p.261.
26. Lee and Archbold, op.cit., p.270.
27. Pierson, British Socialists, p.302.
28. Edinburgh branch SDF, minutes 1919-1927, in the Edinburgh Public Library.
29. Clayton, op.cit., p.180.
30. Western Daily Press, n.d. in The Mattison Collection, Leeds Brotherton Library.
31. SDF Executive Minutes, 26 May 1932, in The National Library of Scotland.
32. Ibid., 23 May and 29 August 1935.

CONCLUSION.

'What of the Social-Democratic Federation?' asked George Bernard Shaw in 1904¹ and the question remains as pertinent today as it was then. Labour history is often the history of successful leaders and organisations, but the movement has evolved as 'the outcome of a highly uneven historical process, involving the ebb and flow of various currents.'² Groups such as the SDF may seem sectarian and unimportant but they have been justified by history in that they are the direct ancestors of the Labour Party, and the debates which exercised the Federation preoccupy Socialists today. Yet its critics have been many, including those from whom one might have expected sympathy. They have been relegated to the margins of history by the modern Labour movement, anxious to refute any Marxist antecedents. It is no accident that historians have seized on Hyndman as synonymous with the SDF for, as John Foster has remarked, 'They love Hyndman, and they love to exaggerate his eccentricities.'³ Through Hyndman it is possible to dismiss the Federation, as Henry Pelling does, as 'a band of ex-Tory adventurers' attempting to impose an alien dogma on a sensible and moderate British people.⁴ More surprisingly Communist historians were also critical, their attitude determined by the hostility of Marx to Hyndman, of Engels to the SDF, and by the criticisms of Lenin. John Foster and Eric Hobsbawm, however, have done much to redress the balance,⁵ and as Hobsbawm suggests, whilst 'It cannot simply be approved' neither can it be 'simply condemned' and

'It certainly cannot be dismissed'.⁶

In the first instance one cannot criticise the Social-Democratic Federation for what it could not seriously hope to have achieved. Various commentators have remarked on the non-revolutionary character of the British working-class. As Keir Hardie would have it, 'We are a solid people, very practical and not given to chasing bubbles.'⁷ Theodore Rothstein, a prominent SDFer, considered, retrospectively, that the failure of the SDF to exercise greater influence on the development of the Labour movement was inescapable given the relatively favourable economic situation of British capitalism.⁸ In an illuminating article Ross McKibbin has detailed the difficulties confronting a Marxist party, prior to 1914, and he concludes that 'Marxism lost all ways'.⁹ The structure of British capitalism and the nature of British trade unionism meant that the potential clientele for a Marxist party was very small. In Britain there was an existing working-class culture, based on sports, religious affiliation and hobbies, which competed with party political action. As McKibbin points out 'it was a life in the broadest sense political - the same kind of people who founded pigeon-breeding societies also founded the Labour Party',¹⁰ but one had to be comparatively unusual to do both. Furthermore Marx's aphorism that the past 'weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living' aptly assesses the inherited traditions in this country, which gave legitimacy to political institutions

and sentiments which in turn largely precluded a revolutionary strategy. Few questioned that a representative parliament was the proper focus of working-class aspirations, that electoralism was legitimate political action whereas the political strike was not. 'This ideological pattern by itself almost entirely distinguished Britain from most of the continental countries',¹¹ and in this context Hyndman's and the SDF's concentration on electoral politics is explicable. Thus James Mawdsley saw no contradiction between his activities as a representative of labour and his position as a Conservative parliamentary candidate; he drew a distinction between the interests of labour and his wider world view in a way common to many. Similarly the traditional separation of economics and politics persisted in Britain, shared by employers and employees alike and exemplified in the support for Free Trade. McKibbin concludes that

Two of the prime assumptions of any Marxist party - a rejection by much of the working class of existing social institutions and a belief in the unity of "economics" and "politics" - simply did not hold. The Labour Party, therefore, was not free to choose between Marxism and reformism but only between varieties of reformism.¹²

Marxism thus operated in an uncongenial climate, and a hostile environment. These early Socialists were victimised

at their place of work; lists of names were posted in the local police station; employers' associations kept 'black-lists'; their meetings were assaulted, and often kept secret in consequence. They were truly pioneers and that alone ensures their place in history. 'Those early agitators and propagandists' said George Hicks, one time General Secretary of The Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, 'must have been heroes indeed possessed of lion-hearted courage and faith that conquers'.¹³ In the 1880s they were charged with an almost millennial fervour: 'we were enthusiasts, fanatics, what you will, imbued with the faith that moves mountains',¹⁴ convinced of the imminent collapse of the capitalist order, and therefore unmindful of the need for a coherent political strategy. The very existence of the group was a strategy in itself - 'its increase in membership, its collective missionary and other activities, just its being there, however small, being a major part of what it was necessary to do to bring Socialism about.'¹⁵ As that phase of the movement passed, and it became necessary to address more pragmatic considerations one can examine the SDF in the light of what was achievable.

As the Socialist movement fragmented after 1895 the myth developed that the SDF was attempting to import an alien ideology into Britain. Bruce Glasier was the prime exponent of this argument and his views have been accepted by Labour orthodoxy and its historians. This is mythological nonsense. Marxism offers a critique of society rather than a finished

body of doctrine, and its critique was readily accessible to the native traditions of the British Labour movement. It must be seen in the context of the autodidactic tradition, the movement for intellectual self-improvement, which flourished among sections of the working class during the nineteenth century. The early experience of grinding poverty was common to many of the SDF's proletarian members. Will Thorne, Quelch, Tillet, Jack Williams and others needed no texts to convince them of the inhumanity of capitalism or the existence of class-conflict, but, like their Owenite and Secularist ancestors, they read and studied in response to their condition, and attempted to work out a general theory which would explain their position.

The idea that Marxism was foisted on such men "from outside" is mistaken: to study and reflect upon a great working-class thinker was as natural to Scots tailors like James MacDonald, or the SDF's atheist Northamptonshire shoemakers, as it had been for their fathers and grandfathers to study and reflect upon Owen, Paine and Spence....¹⁶

What was just as important was that they saw themselves in that tradition; the emphasis was as much on Owen and Bronterre O'Brien as Marx, particularly in the early days of the Federation. The ethical and Nonconformist tradition fostered by the ILP was as alien to the secularist radicals of

Northampton and London as Glasier claimed Marxism to be. In addition, the first generation of British Marxists were an integral part of the intellectual and moral reaction against high Victorian materialism. The SDF collection, How I Became a Socialist, revealed a common process of moral awakening and self-discovery in individuals as diverse as Bax and Quelch, a process identical to that undergone by members of the early Fabians, the members of the various Christian Socialist movements and the Labour Church. Morris, undoubtedly a Marxist, could with equal ease be claimed by the ILP and the SDF because of his combination of social criticism and aesthetic concerns.

The Marxist critique of capitalism had considerable impact upon the rest of the Labour movement. Kenneth Morgan has pointed out that Keir Hardie often claimed to be a disciple of Marx, although it was very much 'a Marx...in his own image.'¹⁷ Nonetheless, the point remains valid and as critics of the social order the SDF played a vital educating role, they were the educators supreme. As Max Beer put it the SDF had 'revolutionised many a head or, at least, compelled thinking'; it had done 'pioneer work, drawing the plough, sowing the seed'; but it had allowed others to reap the fruit.¹⁸ The explanation for this is to be found in the Federation's application of theory, not in the theory itself. SDFers viewed themselves as a vanguard party, yet they failed to act in a manner which would prepare them for the taking of power. Indeed, they were quite unable to visualise the

problems of revolt or the seizure of power for there was no precedent in living memory in Britain. Their vision of the inevitable collapse of capitalism, followed by spontaneous revolution, meant that they limited themselves to an evangelical function. In 1912 Leonard Hall stated that 'Their main function was the education of people in the principles of Socialism',¹⁹ a point which Hyndman would have made in 1884 and which Lee was still stressing in the 1930s.²⁰ Consequently they failed to develop an organisational theory with the result that both in the unions and in the political field 'it proved capable of striking an important response yet in neither case did it have the means to turn the response to advantage.'²¹

The high-water mark of the Federation's influence was undoubtedly the late 1890s, when even Pelling admits that it provided a serious challenge to the ILP,²² both in terms of membership and influence. It was the driving force behind the trade union and Socialist alliance which captured the West Ham borough council in 1898, and it had established an alliance with similar potential in Bow and Bromley. In both those constituencies the SDF had effectively won the political leadership of the working class from the Liberals, so much so that in the 1900 General Election it could secure a straight fight against the Tories. After 1896 the Federation controlled the London Trades Council. In London, says Paul Thompson, the SDF 'far from being the dogmatic bitter sect with little

significant support traditionally pictured by historians, was winning more hard-working and idealistic members among working men than any other political movement.'²³ The SDF's Marxist Socialism had replaced secularist radicalism as the typical creed of the politically active, working class Londoner. Similarly the Federation had established strong roots in Burnley and the cotton towns of North-East Lancashire, in Northampton and in Reading, where Justice had a circulation of 2,000. The SDF provided a viable Socialist alternative to the ILP for those who were dubious about a party which refused to call itself Socialist and who were hostile to its 'Labourist' policies. However the logic of national events - the Labour alliance - eroded the SDF alternative even in those localities where it had established a major presence, and it is clear that the SDF decision to withdraw from that alliance was a massive blunder.

The withdrawal of the SDF from the LRC was a consequence of its failure to develop an effective organisational theory, and in particular its separation of the economic and political spheres of activity. It is quite wrong to say that the SDF was hostile to trade unions, but its conception of their importance was limited and distorted, both by a reliance on the limited number of Marxist texts then available and by the fact that the Federation was formed when the craft unions and the labour aristocracy were still influential. The SDF strategy was to form progressive, Socialist unions that were general unions

and which were subordinated to action in the political sphere. This explains its strategy in 1889-90, when Quelch set up the South Side Protection League and when SDFers had key positions in other unions. They aimed to transform the new unions into citadels of Socialism, yet the SDF unions collapsed because, as general unions in an era of high unemployment, they had no stable base within particular trades. Their attitude to trade unions was reflected in their attitude to the LRC. What was wanted was a Labour Party affiliated to by all unions and informed by socialist doctrine. Because that was demonstrably not the case the SDF withdrew; if it could not control the Labour Party then it would not participate. The SDF's relationship to the Labour Party demonstrates the essentially propagandist nature of its role. It had no conception of organising from below, yet at a time when the LRC had a federal structure the Socialist groups could have exercised considerable influence from within. Rothstein's debate with Hyndman during the Boer War emphasised the point. Socialism, he said, 'cannot be spread like margarine...but must be fought for and won. It is not by preaching the gospel of discontent, but by fighting the cause of the discontented that socialism becomes the all-conquering living force that it is.'²⁴ In an attempt to steer a middle path between reform and revolution the SDF achieved neither. It reacted to events, rather than initiated them, which explains its characteristic abrupt changes of policy. Kendall neatly assesses the problem when he argues that

the absence of an effective organisational theory reduced socialists to endeavouring to influence developments within the labour movement from without at times in which the only effective challenge could be mustered by active participation from within.²⁵

This was true of the LRC and it was also true of the Federation's lack of an industrial strategy, for which its concentration on electoral success never compensated. Thus, although the party had a correct appreciation of the weaknesses of syndicalism it made no attempt to establish the relationship which industrial action could have to political action; the function of the party and the trade union were compartmentalised.

Revolutionary in theory, reformist in practice, the theory became reserved for street-corner oratory, divorced from what the party actually did. As palliatives became more and more the day to day concern so the theory came to reflect the practice. The SDF paid lip-service to the idea that parliament was a sham but in fact became more and more wedded to the electoral approach, preached the self-activity of the working-class but in practice renounced it, rejected utopianism for Marxism but in its view of the working class and its concentration on propaganda was almost utopian in outlook. The goal of revolution was something that had shifted to the

future and party members had to commit themselves to a decidedly non-revolutionary round of party activities. This was almost an excuse to do nothing, and it explains both the staying power of the SDF and its stagnation. However, it must be emphasised that the failures of the SDF were the failures of the Second International, with the fundamental difference that here there was no mass party because of the different British situation. In common with the parties of the Second International the SDF debated its dilemma at great length - the problem was that the debate went on too long - but finally split asunder under the pressure of war. The Bolshevik Revolution resolved the debate by posing a stark choice - revolutionary practice OR reformism and as a result the Social-Democratic tradition merged into the Labour Party and lost its rationale for existence.

To what extent was the party's failure the responsibility of Hyndman and the leadership? Hyndman's personal faults have been well-documented, his idiosyncracies maligned. He was notoriously difficult to work with, 'the worst leader that ever drove his followers into every other camp',²⁶ and his personality was a major factor in the splits which plagued the SDF and deprived it of valuable supporters. There was a strong element of paternalism in his attitude to the Federation and to the working class generally, exemplified by his resignation from the Executive in 1901. To outsiders Hyndman was the Federation and this was the problem; he portrayed a

sectarian attitude which was assumed to be representative of the party. His attitude stemmed from his adoption of Marxism as a formula which predicted the inevitable collapse of capitalism and posed the SDF as the inheritor of state power when the collapse occurred. In the meantime the party should remain theoretically correct and free from compromise. The leadership therefore failed to give any guidance to its members on how to apply their theory. Hence Jackson's comment that they 'thought their duty done' when the message had been preached. One must agree with Hobsbawm that 'superior leadership could unquestionably have given the SDF far greater success and made it far more influential in the wider labour movement than it ever became.'²⁷ Yet one should not underestimate Hyndman's role. He was a tireless pioneer propagandist for Marxism and he gave the SDF a prominence which it would otherwise have lacked. As Tom Mann admitted, Hyndman attracted 'the curious-minded' who would not have stopped to listen to an orator in workman's clothing, whilst his speaking ability and his propagandist tracts were of great value.²⁸ Theodore Rothstein similarly admitted that, with all his faults, Hyndman was the only figure able to give the party a national presence. An uncommitted observer, Holbrook Jackson, thought him 'persuasive, eloquent, laborious... clean and lovable and honest, adored by his followers, honored by Socialist conformists and nonconformists alike, and misrepresented by his foes.'²⁹

What is also underplayed is the fact that the SDF was not the highly centralised body it is often portrayed to be. Its branches were autonomous, its debates democratic and, as Hobsbawm points out, the party often ignored Hyndman where he conflicted with its fundamental orientation and eventually abandoned him altogether. The rank and file often worked independently of the leadership; they did participate in strikes, join unions, agitate for school meals, and enter into local Labour alliances and this meant that the party never became just another sect, cut off from the outside world. Developments in Lancashire and Yorkshire illustrate the diversity of SDF activity. In Lancashire the party sank strong roots because it adapted to the local situation and its members responded to local concerns. They actively assisted the formation of early ILP branches, worked for an alliance with the trade unions, entered their local Labour Representation Committees and performed valuable service on local government bodies. This round of activity did pose a problem for the Lancashire SDF in that it could easily lead to a loss of their Socialist identity, but their enthusiasm for Socialist unity, their unemployed campaigns and their ceaseless propaganda ensured a distinctive presence. In Burnley, Rochdale, Blackburn and Nelson viable Socialist parties were established which, in the 1890s, suggested an alternative strategy to the Labour alliance proposed by the ILP. The SDF never gained such a prominent position in West Yorkshire. It was a late arrival on the political scene in the county and the area's

predominant nonconformity did not provide a congenial atmosphere for the Federation. The formation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 and the SDF's subsequent withdrawal proved a watershed for the party. The contrast between the SDF's national position and the route taken by the party in Lancashire posed a dilemma which local activists were unable to overcome. Although the appeal of a Socialist alternative persisted, as evidenced by the Socialist revival 1905-09 and the short-lived enthusiasm for the BSP, the logic of national developments eventually eroded the party's influence in Lancashire. Paradoxically the SDF in Yorkshire expanded after 1901. Here too there was evidence that the appeal of a Socialist alternative to the Labour alliance persisted. Quelch's campaign at Dewsbury drew support from all shades of Socialist opinion, and in Bradford Hartley was able to build a strong, campaigning branch by appealing to dissident ILPers unhappy with their party's subservience to the trade unions. Yet overall the logic of the situation was as clear here as in Lancashire. Outside the Labour Party the SDF would remain a small, albeit active, minority. Inside the Labour Party, acting in concert with the left wing of the ILP, the SDF could have exercised a more considerable influence at a formative period in the Party's history. After 1901 the Federation was cramped by a lack of political space and the formation of the BSP came too late to offer a credible alternative to the Labour Party. This was soon recognised by the Leeds branch of the BSP, which affiliated to Labour in 1913, and thus anticipated the actions of the national

bodies. Affiliation to the Labour Party was essentially a recognition that the SDF had failed to build a viable Socialist Party in Britain, but that should not obscure the Federation's achievements.

In the first instance the point about the Social-Democratic Federation is that it lasted. It maintained a national political presence for 40 years whilst its rivals on the revolutionary left disappeared or remained negligible bodies of regional influence. In several areas it established itself as the major Socialist organisation, achieving municipal electoral success and widespread influence within the Labour movement. More importantly it educated and it operated as a powerhouse transmitting ideas to the wider movement. The SDF produced a whole generation of working-class intellectuals - Quelch, Mann, Lansbury, Maclean, Jackson, Pollitt and Gallacher to name but a few - and it influenced the whole movement out of all proportion to its numbers. James Ramsay MacDonald, Ernest Bevin and Margaret Bondfield all spent formative periods in the SDF ranks, whilst in the localities hundreds of local leaders were introduced to Socialism by the party. As Laurence Thompson says,

There was scarcely a pioneer of modern British Socialism who did not pass through it or owe some debt to it...it was Marxism popularised at various levels by Hyndman and his handful of disciples which created the modern mass

Socialist movement in this country.³⁰

The SDF educated but also it agitated and in agitating it originated many of the tactics of mass action taken up in later years. Unemployed agitation was an SDF monopoly. It organised the first unemployed hunger march, inaugurated mass action against Boards of Guardians, and set up 'Right to Work' Committees. They linked the issue of unemployment to that of housing, and took the initiative in forming the Workmen's National Housing Council in 1898. On the question of free speech, a question vital to working-class interests, the SDF role was crucial. It mobilised masses of people on this issue not only in London but in towns up and down the country. More significantly, as John Foster points out, SDF agitation was effective. The Chamberlain circular on unemployment in 1886 and the Booth survey of London poverty were both partly responses to SDF action, whilst in 1904-05 government policy on unemployment was made in direct response to the SDF's street protests.

The SDF contribution to education is often under-valued. The demand for free, compulsory, secular education was one of the main points in the original SDF programme, and the demand for free school meals was originated by the SDF. Justice devoted considerable attention to the physical condition of the children and the branches awarded it similar importance.³¹ The Federation was instrumental in providing breakfasts for

starving children in East London. The Times obituary of Matilda Hyndman commented that 'she organised free meals for children, for several winters in succession...and was also active in the provision of free holidays for children, long before either of those things received any general recognition.'³² The SDF co-operated with the TUC and the London Trades Council in sponsoring the Guildhall Conference for the consideration of State Maintenance in January 1905, and the issue was the main priority in its Election Manifesto of 1906. Furthermore, Dan Irving was the first to relate the demand for state maintenance to the question of child labour in factories, the half-time system. The SDF was firmly opposed to this 'and it is to its credit that it took this issue up at a time when such a stand did not make for popularity among textile workers or in other quarters.'³³ The most direct way of influencing developments was by electing representatives to the School Boards, and the ability of voters to give all their votes to one or two candidates aided the return of minority interest groups. Jonathan Taylor of Sheffield was the first SDFer to be elected to a School Board, in 1885, and others followed in his steps. Although always in a minority on the Boards the record of SDF members was impressive. They were instrumental in ensuring that School Board contracts should only be given to firms who paid 'fair wages', and in campaigning for the abolition of school fees. In Burnley Dan Irving also succeeded in getting special classes for the physically

and mentally handicapped. Robert Smillie won the provision of free books in Larkhall. SDFers in Reading forced an official enquiry into childrens' health which led to the appointment of a Medical Officer in a consultative capacity, 'an important achievement in itself and perhaps even more important as a precedent.'³⁴ Finally, in the field of adult education, the SDF played an important role in organising classes for sustained study, concentrating particularly on Marxist works. John Maclean's Glasgow classes were outstandingly successful but all local branches devoted time to these study classes, forming a tradition which persisted into the Plebs League and the Central Labour College, and which produced generations of working-class militants.

Education and propaganda were the main achievements of the Social-Democratic Federation producing, to use Foster's phrase, 'a cultural combativeness' against the culture of the ruling class. Its agitation too was effective. Organisation, however, was its weak point, both in theory and in practice. Yet this should not blind us to the role played by SDF members in the growth of new unionism, nor in the development of the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Party. Lastly, the Federation recreated the tradition of working-class internationalism. It originated in a reaction to coercion in Ireland and continued to support Irish liberation, Hyndman's record of support for the Indian National Congress was unsurpassable, so much so that the British Government banned the sale of Justice in India.

And, of course, the BSP was the third European Socialist party, after the Russians and Italians, to declare its opposition to the Great War. The record of the SDF was a proud one. It met the fate of many a pioneer, but where it first trod many followed:

At street corners, in the parks, at workmen's clubs this Socialist propaganda proceeds incessantly. Common labourers become ready speakers, ordinary workmen skilled organisers. You see that delicate-looking young man holding forth at that gathering of half-a-hundred persons a little way up that back street under the lamplight. Don't regard him as an unimportant or uninteresting figure. His words will come back to these people when they have a Labour grievance. He is in earnest, and those people with the shabby clothes approve heartily his every word. Time was when the Socialist would be ridiculed, or persecuted! Now he sits in Parliament and on the City Council, is the lion of drawing-rooms and the pet of slums. And it is this Social-Democratic Federation which has made these things possible.³⁵

H. G. Wells said of Hyndman that he had 'a magnificent obstinacy,'³⁶ George Bernard Shaw that he had no virtue

except one - 'he has kept the flag flying - the red flag... the exception suffices.'³⁷ What was true of Hyndman is no mean epitaph for the organisation he founded, for the SDF operated in an environment which was not conducive to its development. The frustrations of its activists led to divisions within the party which did not enhance its cause. In the end it was working-class organisations which adapted to the structure of British society which did best, a fact which the SDF belatedly realised. In the 1880s the Federation had hoped 'to make twelve o'clock at eleven', to initiate revolutionary change in British society. Thereafter the leaders of the party postponed the Socialist ideal for the future and concentrated on more immediate goals, but they would not accepted the organisational corollary of this change, namely to work within the existing structures and organisations of the Labour movement. Such a course would undoubtedly have maintained and extended its influence, but the fate of the ILP is a salutary reminder that this alternative provided no panacea for Socialist success. The ILP worked for a Labour alliance, the SDF attempted to build a Socialist alternative which espoused a middle path between reform and revolution. Ultimately, to borrow R. E. Dowse's epithet, they were both 'Left in the Centre'.³⁸ The only alternative to the Labour Party was a revolutionary party, a fact recognised by the majority of the BSP who, once more, embarked as 'a tiny caravan of missionaries' into the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920.

NOTES.

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4. Pelling, op.cit., pp.169-173 and 217.
5. Foster, op.cit., pp.25-37; Hobsbawm, 'Hyndman and the SDF', pp.231-238.
6. Hobsbawm, 'Hyndman and the SDF', p.231.
7. K. O. Morgan, Keir Hardie, (1984), p.40.
8. Rothstein, op.cit., p.276.
9. R. McKibbin, 'Why was there no Marxism in Great Britain?', English Historical Review, 99(391), April 1984, p.306.
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11. Ibid., p.318.
12. Ibid., pp.330-31.
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16. Hobsbawm, 'Hyndman and the SDF', p.235.
17. Morgan, op.cit., p.203.
18. Justice, 2 June 1906.
19. BSP Conference Report, 1912, p.16.
20. Lee and Archbold, op.cit., pp.268-71.
21. Kendall, The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, p.294.
22. Pelling, op.cit., p.171.
23. P. Thompson, 'Liberals, Radicals and Labour in London 1880-1900', p.93.
24. Justice, 27 July 1901.
25. Kendall, The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, p.295.
26. Quoted in R. T. Hyndman, op.cit., p.285.
27. Hobsbawm, 'Hyndman and the SDF', p.237.
28. Mann, Memoirs, pp.26-27.
29. T. P.'s Weekly, quoted in Justice, 28 October 1911.
30. L. Thompson, The Enthusiasts, (1971), p.34.
31. See, for example, the minutes of the Hackney and Kingsland branch in A. Rothstein, An S.D.F. Branch 1903-6, Our History Pamphlet No. 19, Autumn 1960.
32. The Times, 30 June 1913, in B. Simon, Education and the Labour Movement 1870-1920, (1965), p.135.
33. Simon, op.cit., p.139.
34. Simon, op.cit., p.157.
35. Reynolds' Newspaper, 7 May 1904.
36. Hyndman, Further Reminiscences, p.511.

37. R. T. Hyndman, op.cit., pp.287-8.
38. R. E. Dowse, Left in the Centre, (1966).

APPENDIX A.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

These notes, although not exhaustive, cover some of the major figures, both local and national, discussed in the text. They serve to emphasise the diversity of opinions and experience within the SDF, whilst the later careers of many of these SDF members demonstrate the importance of the Federation as a training-ground for Labour activists.

ALFRED BARTON, 1868-1933.

Born 30 July 1868 in Bedfordshire, the son of a foundry labourer, Barton moved to Manchester in 1890. He joined the Socialist League, and was on its anarchist wing. Barton was arrested several times during free speech fights. He moved to Sheffield in 1897, joined the ILP, and gained a reputation as the "Monolith Orator". By this time Barton had abandoned anarchism for more conventional political activity and became a member of the Shop Assistants' Union and its delegate to the Trades Council. In 1907 he was elected Councillor for the Brightside ward, but lost the seat in 1910. Discontented with the record of the Labour Party he joined the BSP in 1911, in the same year publishing a pamphlet, The Universal Strike, which revealed his support for syndicalism. Barton regained his Brightside seat in 1913, standing as a BSP candidate without Trades Council support,

and held it until 1920. He supported the Allied war effort from the 'sane patriotic' viewpoint, as expressed in his pamphlet The War: How it was Made, who shall profit by it? After a brief flirtation with the Communist Party he moved towards 'ethical Socialism' and rejoined the ILP. After two unsuccessful parliamentary contests he rejoined the Council in 1926 and was made an Alderman in 1929. He died 9 December 1933.

ERNEST BELFORT BAX, 1854-1926

From a middle-class, Nonconformist background, Bax was turned to thoughts of revolution by the Paris Commune. Contacts with the English Positivists attached him to the idea of a 'religion of humanity', whilst a visit to Germany in the mid-1870s encouraged him to develop his own philosophical system which replaced the old religious sentiments with feelings and energies centred on a social ideal. Bax viewed Marxism as a case of arrested development, of a 'crude and dogmatic materialism' which ignored underlying metaphysical issues. Nonetheless, believing that Marx had discovered the underlying factor which determined the constitution of society, he accepted the Marxist theory of economic development and believed that fundamental changes in human consciousness would await the revolutionary transformation of society. To this end he was one of the pioneer Social-Democrats, joining the Democratic Federation in 1882. He wrote an article summarising Marx for English readers in 1882, but thereafter saw his task

as enlightening Socialists to their ethical or religious mission rather than participating in political or economic struggles. In many ways akin to Morris Bax followed him into the Socialist League, co-wrote its manifesto, worked closely with him on Commonweal and collaborated in the writing of Socialism, Its Growth and Outcome. Bax left the League in 1888, as it drifted into anarchism, and rejoined the SDF where he occupied himself largely with attacking middle-class conventions and developing the Socialist ethic. His attacks on Christianity worried many SDFers, who saw them as a political liability, but his two volumes of essays The Religion of Socialism and The Ethics of Socialism were very influential and his historical writings widely read. Within the SDF his views on women were controversial, whilst he was a fervent internationalist and opponent of Hyndman pre-1914. However, with the advent of war he accused the pacifists of abandoning all ethical judgements and supported Hyndman. Bax remained in the SDF until his death in December 1926.

HERBERT BURROWS 1845-1921.

Burrows was born in Redgrave, Suffolk, the son of a Chartist and Methodist local preacher. He studied at Cambridge and established a Unitarian Church there with William Clarke, the early Fabian. At first a teacher he became an Inland Revenue official. In June 1881 Burrows attended a Democratic Federation meeting at the Memorial Hall, London, and was identified with the SDF thereafter. He was also a close

associate of Annie Besant, helping her to organise the Bryant and May match girls in 1888 and sharing her conversion to Theosophy. Burrows was twice a defeated candidate for the Shoreditch, Haggerston constituency, in 1906 and 1910. He resigned from the SDF in 1911 in protest at Hyndman's support for an enlarged navy but rejoined soon after. He died in 1921 after a paralysis lasting six years.

H. H. CHAMPION 1859-1928.

From an upper-class background Champion attended Marlborough school and then joined the Indian Army. Converted to Socialism by reading Henry George and then Marx, Champion left the army at the age of 23. With a legacy from his father he bought a printing press and in 1884 started the monthly magazine Today. The year previously he had joined the SDF and become its first secretary. He helped to found the Clerkenwell branch and was prominent in the SDF's unemployed campaigns in the mid-1880s. Champion's role in the 'Tory Gold' controversy excited much condemnation, although it is clear that the plan had Executive sanction. By late 1886 Champion was disillusioned with the SDF and in May 1887 he started Common Sense and in 1888 the Labour Elector, which advocated immediate reforms and the ultimate formation of an independent Labour party. In the meantime Champion advocated intervention in elections to seek pledges from candidates on labour issues. He was active in Keir Hardie's Mid-Lanark campaign and co-operated with Mann, Burns and

Tillett in the London dock strike. Champion contested Aberdeen in the 1892 general election, but his continued association with Maltman Barry obliged the ILP to repudiate him and in 1894 he emigrated to Australia, his political career in Britain over. In Australia he resumed his publishing activities, was active in the Victorian Socialist Party, and a supporter of women's suffrage.

SELINA COOPER, 1864-1946.

Selina Cooper was an early member of the Nelson SDF and a founder member of the Brierfield branch. She was a passionate believer in women's self-education and, later, in women's suffrage. In 1901 she was elected onto the Board of Guardians as a joint SDF/ILP candidate, but she gradually moved away from the SDF as the Labour alliance became increasingly important in Nelson. The SDF's attitude to women's suffrage was also a factor. After 1904 she was increasingly involved in the suffrage movement and became a full-time organiser for Mrs. Fawcett's National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. Thereafter she was a prominent ILP activist.

E. C. FAIRCHILD, 1874-?

Born in London on the 27 September 1874, Fairchild was apprenticed as a bookbinder, was later a workshop manager, and subsequently devoted himself to full-time political activity. He joined the ILP in 1894 and the SDF in 1895. Fairchild was elected to the Hackney Borough Council in 1903, became London organiser of the SDF in 1910 and later the manager

of Co-operative Supplies Limited. A leading figure in the pre-war opposition to Hyndman, he led the opposition to Hyndman on the Executive of the BSP during the war. An orthodox or 'centre' Social-Democrat, Fairchild resigned from the BSP on its acceptance of Communist tactics in 1919.

JOE FINEBERG, 1886-1957.

Joe Fineberg was born in Russian Poland in 1886 but came to England when only 18 months old. An East London tailoring worker, he was a consistent opponent of Hyndman within the SDF. He was a member of the BSP Executive from 1914 to 1917 and, after the October Revolution in Russia, Fineberg was unofficial Bolshevik representative in Britain. He returned to Russia in June 1918 and was involved in the preliminaries to the foundation of the Communist International. Later, in 1925, he became Tass correspondent in Peking. He died in 1957.

F. VICTOR FISHER, 1870-1954.

Born in London in 1870 of a Hungarian father and English mother, Fisher was educated privately in London and then in Paris. In the 1890s he worked in Paris as a journalist and banker and then in Manchester as a journalist. He opposed the Boer War, became secretary of the National Democratic League and moved, via the Fabian Society, to the SDF. Bitterly opposed to pacifism, Fisher became the leading figure in the Socialist National Defence Committee and the British Workers' League, but he eventually ended up in the Conservative Party, for whom he was an unsuccessful candidate in the 1923

General Election. He died in 1954.

WILLIAM GALLACHER, 1881-1965.

Gallacher was born in Paisley on the 25th of December 1881. He became prominent as a trade unionist and Socialist leader. Originally an ILPer he joined the SDF in 1905 and was later influenced by syndicalism. A leading member of the Clyde Workers' Committee and the Shop Stewards' Movement during the First World War, he attended the 2nd World Congress of the Communist International in August 1920 and subsequently joined the CPGB. Gallacher later achieved fame as one of the few British Communist M.P.s, representing West Fife from 1935-50. He died on the 12th August 1965.

CHARLES AUGUSTUS GLYDE, 1869-1923.

Born in Leeds in 1869, Glyde and his family moved to Bolton in 1887. He was at that time a member of the Salvation Army but soon joined the SDF, where he was greatly influenced by Tom Mann, then the Bolton organiser for the Federation. Glyde moved to Bradford in 1890 and after witnessing the Manningham Mills strike joined the Bradford Labour Union and the Fabian Society. He became a close associate of Edward Hartley and a well-known figure with his aggressive speeches and flamboyant style. Elected councillor for Tong Ward in 1904, Glyde was a forceful advocate of the feeding of schoolchildren and became one of the leaders of the Bradford unemployed, organising the land-grab in 1905. His outstanding contribution to the Bradford Socialist movement was as a propagandist and he

published eight 'Pamphlets for the People'. Later he edited his own newspaper, the Bradford Socialist Vanguard. Glyde was adamantly opposed to the 1914-18 war, seeing it as contrary to all principles of Christian brotherhood and Socialist internationalism. He was prosecuted under the Defence of the Realm Act in 1916. His intense political activity eventually affected his health and he retired from public life in 1920, and died in August 1923.

J. F. GREEN.

Ex-curate and possessed of a small private income, Green was at one time treasurer of the SDF. He resigned from the Federation in 1911, along with Herbert Burrows, in protest at Hyndman's 'big navy' agitation. Upon the outbreak of war, however, Green became virulently anti-German and followed Victor Fisher into the Socialist National Defence Committee and then the British Workers' League. He defeated James Ramsay MacDonald at West Leicester in 1918 by 15,000 votes. Green gravitated to the right and eventually took a position in Unionist Headquarters.

JAMES GRIBBLE, 1868-1934.

James Gribble was born on 12 January 1868, the eldest of nine children. His father was a machine closer in the shoe trade and Gribble started work in the boot trade at the age of 12. He served in the army from 1885-1893 and then returned to the boot trade in Northampton, joining the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives and, in November 1894, the SDF.

Gribble became a full-time organiser for the NUBSO in 1902 and served on its National Executive 1906-09. He was the dominant figure in the local SDF, helping to launch the Northampton Pioneer in 1897, organising the famous Raunds unemployed march in 1905, and initiating the Pioneer Boot Works which contributed £2339 to SDF funds between 1904 and 1916. Gribble was full-time manager of the Boot Works 1905-14. Known locally for his fiery temperament, Gribble was arrested several times on unemployed demonstrations and in 1904 was ejected from the council chamber and charged with assaulting a local alderman, for which he served onemonth in prison. In 1903 he was elected councillor for the North Ward, serving intermittently until 1915, and he was also a Poor Law Guardian 1904-07. Gribble was twice an unsuccessful parliamentary candidate. He followed Hyndman in supporting the war, served on the Northampton Appeals Tribunal and established the Northampton Allied War Fund. He became a J.P. in 1923 and died in August 1934.

THOMAS J. HACKING, 1870-1906.

By trade a baker, Thomas Hacking was one of the most prominent advocates of trade unionism in Rochdale. He was connected with the Bakers' and Confectioners' Society over a period of 15 years, holding various official positions, and was its delegate to the Trades Council from 1892. In 1898 he won Wardleworth West Ward for the SDF, its first municipal success in Rochdale, and he was returned unopposed in 1901 and 1904. Hacking was a member of the Health, Building, and Education Committees on the Council.

LEONARD HALL, 1866-?

Born in 1866 in Windermere, the son of Dr. S. T. Hall, Leonard Hall was first employed as a parcel-boy in 1879, then successively as a printer's boy, sailor and, during a visit to the United States, as a cowboy. Upon his return from America Hall became a journalist, was active in organising the Ship Canal Navvies, and was elected General Secretary of the Lancashire Labour Amalgamation. He was an early member of the SDF but moved to the ILP, becoming President of the Lancashire and Cheshire ILP. At one time on the Executive of the party Hall became disillusioned with its attachment to the Labour Party and was one of the signatories of the 'Green Manifesto' in 1910. He was one of the founders of the BSP, a member of the Provisional Executive elected at the 1911 Unity Conference, and elected to the Executive in 1912. However, Hall soon gravitated towards syndicalism and broke with the BSP because of its refusal to approve industrial action. He later joined the Socialist Labour Party.

W. K. HALL,

Hall, SDF parliamentary candidate for South Salford in 1892, was something of a jack of all trades, ex straw-plater, navvy, canal boat man, foundry labourer, tramguard, and collier. As a foundryman in Scotland he had studied at night, including Latin and French. He had read Louis Blanc in French and looked up the SDF after reading Justice.

EDWARD ROBERTSHAW HARTLEY, 1855-1918.

Hartley, a Bradford butcher, came into prominence in local politics in the early 1890s at a time of severe unemployment. He helped to form the Bradford Labour Union and was a founder member of the ILP, but the events surrounding the Dewsbury by-election in 1902 led him to join the SDF. Hartley was always a strong proponent of Socialist unity and his reputation in Bradford helped to prevent a repetition of the national disputes between the SDF and the ILP. He was on the SDF Executive for seven years and fought five unsuccessful parliamentary campaigns under its auspices. He was also Secretary of the Clarion Van Movement 1910-12, and then went to Australia and New Zealand for 18 months. During the First World War Hartley joined Fisher's British Workers' League and as a result lost much of his support in Bradford. He died in 1918.

AMELIA (AMIE) JANE HICKS, 1839/40?-1917.

Amie Hicks was the daughter of a Chartist. In 1865 she and her husband William emigrated to New Zealand but returned to England in the early 1880s. By the spring of 1883 they and one of their daughters, Margaretta, had joined the Democratic Federation. She was elected to the Executive in 1884, and was a candidate for the London School Board in 1885 and 1888. Amie was both a popular open-air speaker and lecturer. She was fined £20 during the Dod Street free speech campaign and was also involved, with her son Alfred, in the unemployed

agitation. At the time of her School Board contests she was a midwife. After the Dock Strike Amie helped to form the Women's Trade Union Association and was also elected secretary of the East London Ropemakers' Union, a position she held for 10 years. As their representative on the London Trades Council Amie was the first woman to sit on a Trades Council. From 1894-1908 she was on the Executive of the Womens' Industrial Council, and in her last years a vice-president of the National Organisation of Girls' Clubs. Her daughter Margaretta was secretary of the Womens' Council of the BSP.

THOMAS HURLEY, ?-1933.

A native of Blackburn and son of an Irish exile, 'Tom' Hurley was reared in a Radical atmosphere but was converted to Socialism and became one of the original members of the SDF in the town. He was a great orator, 'fluent in speech and trenchant in debate', and an omniverous reader. Hurley caused a sensation in Blackburn when he headed the poll in the School Board Election of 1895, and even more of a furore when he forced and won the first election for the position of elective auditor in 1898. In 1899 Hurley won St. Paul's Ward for the SDF, but resigned from the Council two years later. After three unsuccessful attempts to regain a seat Hurley returned to public life in 1921, but he was now a changed man, more tolerant of the views of others and less militant. At various times a shuttlemaker, quarryman, and club steward, he was secretary of the local branch of the General Workers'

Union and later district organising secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Shuttlemakers. He was also vice-president of the old Blackburn Trades Council, first president of the reorganised Trades Council and Labour Party from 1923 until his death in 1933, and a Poor Law Guardian after 1925. 'Tom' Hurley was truly a pioneer of the Socialist/Labour cause in North-East Lancashire, and his work for education in Blackburn drew tributes from all political parties.

HENRY MAYERS HYNDMAN, 1842-1921.

Founder and leader of the Social-Democratic Federation, Hyndman left his impress on the party until 1916. Born to a prosperous family of colonial connections, he attended Trinity College, Cambridge, studied for the bar and travelled in Italy, Australia and the United States. After a failed attempt to run for Parliament Hyndman read Das Kapital in the French and was converted to Socialism. He helped to found the Democratic Federation in 1881, issuing delegates with his England for All which used some of Marx's ideas without acknowledgement - this occasioned a breach both with Marx and Engels. In 1883 The Historical Basis for Socialism was published, the first native Marxist text. The following year the Federation became a definitely Socialist party. As its leading public figure Hyndman was an invaluable asset but his authoritarianism and inflexibility alienated many, leading to splits in the party in 1884 and again in 1903-04. After the revolutionary enthusiasm of the 1880s Hyndman adopted an

essentially parliamentary stance, and was a candidate for Burnley on four occasions. Although defeated each time he remained essentially optimistic that Britain would be the first country to reach Socialism, via a peaceful transition of society. His views were increasingly challenged after the SDF merged into the British Socialist Party in 1911, and opposition to his leadership increased when he voiced outright support for the Allied cause in the First World War. He led the pro-war group in a breakaway from the BSP in 1916, forming the National Socialist Party which later readopted the name of Social-Democratic Federation. Hyndman died in 1921.

DAVID DANIEL (DAN) IRVING, 1854-1924.

Dan Irving was born in Birmingham in 1854. After a spell in the mercantile marine between the ages of 13 and 21, he became a foreman shunter for the Midland Railway Company. Embittered by his demotion after losing a leg in an accident Irving joined the Socialist movement. Originally a member of the Bristol Socialist Society he joined the Starnthwaite farm colony in the Lake District 1892-93 and then became a full-time organiser for the Burnley SDF. He was the secretary of the Burnley branch for 25 years and a member of Burnley Town Council and Education Committee for 22 years. On the Executive of the SDF from 1897-1915, Irving was a firm adherent of Hyndman and followed him out of the BSP in 1916. After several unsuccessful parliamentary candidatures for the SDF he was elected Labour M.P. for Burnley in 1918, and

retained the seat until his death in 1924.

T. A. JACKSON, 1879-1955.

Born in Clerkenwell, the son of a compositor with radical views, Jackson joined the SDF in 1900. He joined the 'impossibilist' revolt against Hyndman but, being blacklisted in the printing trade because of his Socialist views, became a free-lance orator and writer. He soon won attention as a militant Marxist and atheist, participating in J. W. Gott's campaigns against the blasphemy laws. He was arrested during the war and charged with sedition, but Jackson conducted his defence so skilfully that the case was dismissed. Around that time he joined the SLP and supported the faction which merged into the CPGB in 1920. He was a member of the party's central committee from 1924-29. Although he remained a party member for the rest of his life he took a very critical attitude towards the party leadership in the late 1920's, objecting to the way in which the Comintern imposed an 'ultra-left', sectarian policy upon the CPGB. After 1929 Jackson moved to live in Sussex, where he spent much of his time writing and lecturing. During the Second World War he was re-employed by the Communist Party as a lecturer, and remained so until 1949. The last five years of his life were spent largely in reading and writing, and in 1953 appeared what was intended to be the first part of a two volume autobiography entitled Solo Trumpet. This is invaluable for its account of the Federation's activities and internal disputes at the turn of the century.

GEORGE AND HENRY JESSOP.

George Jessop, a Batley tailor, had supplied dozens of suits and cloth to striking miners in Hemsworth. He had a factory on Station Road in Batley and shops on Bradford Road and Commercial Street, with a further outlet in Heckmondwike. 'Everybody went to George Jessop's', remembered one Batley man, and a worker at the factory thought him a 'cheerful little man...always swearing.' He had introduced an Eight-Hour Day for his workers with no wage reductions, and promised that if employers elsewhere were paying higher wages then he would match them. Jessop was a Liberal councillor but obviously one of extreme Radical views, for he contributed to the funds of the SDF and later the SLP. He also allowed his grounds to be used, free of charge, by the Socialists. His son Henry was 'an ardent supporter' of the SDF and also a free-thinker. At the SDF garden party in August 1902 he explained his position thus:

Whilst they could scarcely call him a working man in the ordinary sense of the word he would rather be a working man than anything else. He had known what it had been to scramble from the bottom rung of the ladder, and he had the deepest possible sympathy with his fellow workmen. He had often been told by manufacturing friends of his that he was no Socialist. Possibly that was true and he could only say that he wished he were a Socialist. It was because he had sympathy with

the movement that he had asked them to spend the day with him in the hope that he might in that way do them a good turn.

Henry Jessop was a prominent local benefactor and the family is still remembered through Jessop's Park on Healey Lane, which they converted from a field to a recreation area for old people.

J. L. JOYNES, ? -1893.

A schoolmaster at Eton, Joynes was much impressed by Henry George's Progress and Poverty and spent the summer of 1882 travelling in Ireland with George. The two were temporarily imprisoned under the Coercion Act, and when Joynes recounted his experiences, first in The Times and later in book-form, he was forced to resign his post. He joined the DF, was founder and co-editor of the Christian Socialist and Today, and a translator of German poetry. Ill-health curtailed his activities and a serious illness in 1889 made it impossible for him to take any further active part in the Socialist movement.

THOMAS KENNEDY, 1876-1954.

Kennedy was born at Kennethmont, Aberdeenshire, and educated at Kennethmont Public School and Gordon School, Huntly. He was for seven years a lecturer on Socialism under the auspices of the Clarion, before joining the SDF. He was appointed the Federation's Scottish organiser in 1903 and was its

parliamentary candidate for Aberdeen North in 1906 and January 1910. Kennedy was a devoted Hyndmanite and supported the Allied war effort, enlisting in the forces himself. After demobilisation he became General Secretary of the reformed SDF and remained a member through its declining years. He won Kirkcaldy Burghs for Labour at a by-election in 1921, lost the seat in 1922, but regained it in the general election of 1923. Kennedy held the seat until 1931 and then again from 1935-44. He was Lord-Commissioner of the Treasury in the first Labour government, Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury in the second and Labour chief whip from 1927-31.

BERT KILLIP, 1879-?

Born in 1879, Killip was employed by Birkenhead Corporation for seven years but victimised for his political activity on behalf of the Birkenhead Socialist Party. He was then employed by J. W. Gott as a salesman for his clothing firm, a job which enabled him to act as organiser for Gott's British Secular League. Killip was appointed organiser of the Leeds SDF in 1907, where he established a trading department producing 'Red Flag' toffee and chocolate, which contributed much needed funds to the party. Until 1913 Killip was very much against SDF affiliation to the Labour Party, and he provoked uproar in Labour ranks in 1909 when he stood against the Trades Council secretary in Armley ward and cost him the seat. He also moved the expulsion of Will

Thorne from the party in 1910 on the grounds that his position as Labour M.P. was incompatible with his membership of the SDF. His views mellowed however, and in 1913 the Leeds BSP affiliated to the Labour Party. He became a vice-president of the Labour Party in Leeds and the party's elective auditor. Always a staunch Hyndmanite, Killip was present at the founding meeting of the NSP in 1916. After serving in the Forces he returned to the SDF and acted as organiser for Kennedy at the by-election at Kirkcaldy Burghs in 1921.

FRED KNEE, 1868-1914.

Fred Knee was born in Frome, Somerset in 1868, the son of a weaver. As a boy he thought he had a vocation for the religious life but this changed, in adult life, into a vocation to work for the cause of labour. He moved to London in 1890 to work as a compositor in the printing trade, and in 1891 joined both the Fabian Society and the SDF. His political activity was more than matched by his trade union endeavours and in 1896 he became 'father of the chapel' at his workplace. From 1900-06 he was an alderman on Battersea Borough Council, resigning because of political disagreements with John Burns, the M.P. for Battersea. Knee was reader, then sub-editor, of Justice under Harry Quelch, and from 1909 a full-time employee of the Twentieth Century Press. At the same time he was Secretary of the Workmen's National Housing Council, which he had helped to found in 1898. The success of this

organisation, which succeeded in getting state aid for local authority housing adopted in the Housing Act of 1914, was largely due to Kneebone. The great achievement of his last years was the formation of the London Labour Party, in the face of much opposition from Quelch, who regarded it as a betrayal of the class war.

GEORGE LANSBURY 1859-1940.

One of nine children born to a railway timekeeper, George Lansbury led a rough and semi-nomadic childhood. Both his parents drank heavily, hence he became a strict teetotaler and temperance man. After two years in Australia, 1884-86, he became involved in Liberal politics, secretary of the party in Bow and a Liberal agent. A visit to Ireland in 1889 and the shouting down of his proposal for the Eight-Hour Day at the Liberal Conference in Manchester led him into the SDF. He was elected to the Board of Guardians in 1892 and he and others gained a considerable Socialist influence both there and on the Poplar Borough Council. Lansbury was political secretary of the SDF in 1897 and stood unsuccessfully for Bow and Bromley in the 'khaki election' of 1900. Thereafter he moved away from the Federation. He won Bow and Bromley for Labour in December 1910 and gained notoriety for his support of the suffragettes: he was expelled from the Commons in 1912, arrested under the 'Cat and Mouse Act' in 1913, and resigned his seat to refight it on the suffragettes' behalf. He lost. In 1913 Lansbury became the editor of the Daily

Herald, which took a strongly anti-war stance. From 1919-22 he was Mayor of Poplar, leading the famous Poplar revolt against the Government over the poor rate. He was re-elected to Parliament in 1922, became First Commissioner of Works in the Labour Government of 1929, and was the sole surviving member of the Labour cabinet after the election which followed the formation of the National Government. Hence he was leader of the Labour Party until 1935, when he resigned over the issue of rearmament. He visited all Heads of State, including Hitler, in a desperate individual attempt to prevent war.

JAMES LEATHAM, 1865-1945.

From a radical, self-improving background in mid-Victorian Aberdeen, James Leatham became the principal standard-bearer of Socialism in his native city and was, indeed, one of the leading Socialist pioneers in Scotland during the late 1880s. and early 1890s. He moved to Manchester in the mid-1890s as organiser for the SDF and later, as editor-manager of the Worker Press at Huddersfield, he was a leading ILP journalist and writer. He joined the Labour Party in 1918 but was disillusioned by the experience of the first Labour Government and resigned his chairmanship of the East Aberdeenshire Divisional Labour Party in 1924. Thereafter he devoted himself to local politics in the area, regarding the 'making of Socialists' as his outstanding concern.

H. W. LEE, 1865-1932.

Lee developed radical views as a youth via a shoemaker-uncle

who had been connected with the Chartist movement, and the reading of Reynold's Newspaper. Whilst listening to Charles Bradlaugh speak in Trafalgar Square on August Bank Holiday 1883 Lee bought a copy of Socialism Made Plain. This led him to study Socialism and he became convinced that advanced Radicalism and, in Lee's case, Republicanism offered no solution to social and economic problems. He enrolled in the Democratic Federation in January 1884. At that time he was a clerk at a West End stationers, but in August 1885 he was appointed secretary of the SDF. Lee remained secretary of the SDF/BSP until 1913, very much an anonymous figure but essential to the party's organisation. As he later remembered, he never visited any of the provincial branches prior to 1911, so tied up was he with his administrative duties in London. After Quelch's death in 1913 Lee became editor of Justice, remaining in that post until the paper's demise in 1924. Always a loyal Hyndmanite Lee followed his leader in support of the war and out of the BSP in 1916. He wrote the first half of the Federation's official history, Social-Democracy in Britain, but died before the work was complete.

JAMES MACDONALD, 1857-?

Born in Edinburgh in 1857, MacDonald came to London in 1881 and worked in the West-End as a tailor. He joined the Central Marylebone Democratic Association and then became one of the first members of the SDF and a member of its first executive. MacDonald followed William Morris into the Socialist League,

but rejoined the SDF in 1887. In 1888 he and Lewis Lyons were instrumental in the agitation which led to the founding of the Amalgamated Tailors' Union. In 1905 he led a secession from the national union to form the London Society of Tailors and Tailoresses. MacDonald was a member of the London Trades Council Executive from 1891 and its Secretary from 1896-1913. He was twice parliamentary candidate for Dundee, although running under the auspices of the ILP.

JOHN MACLEAN, 1879-1923.

John Maclean was born in Pollokshaws, the sixth child of working-class parents whose families had both been forced by poverty to migrate to the industrial south of Scotland from the Western Highlands. His father died while John was still young, but his mother managed to send him to Glasgow University, and he then became a teacher under the Govan School Board. He was converted to Socialism by reading Blatchford and to Marxism by Das Kapital. Around 1903 he joined the SDF, rapidly becoming its principal speaker in Glasgow. Initially an orthodox Social-Democrat Maclean became estranged from the party leadership over the issue of national defence and moved rapidly to the left. He was totally opposed to the First World War and played a major role in the upheavals on Clydeside. As a result he was imprisoned five times for making seditious speeches. Maclean's was very much an isolated voice in the BSP as he called for opposition to the

war to be transformed into a revolutionary war to bring down the government. His unstinting support for the revolutionary cause was recognised by Lenin in 1918 when he appointed him Bolshevik Consul in Britain. Events in Scotland during the war years led John Maclean to a distinctive synthesis of nationalism and Socialism. He refused to join the CPGB as a result and early in 1923 founded the Scottish Workers' Republican Party. He died later the same year.

TOM MAGUIRE, 1864-1895.

From a very poor Irish Catholic background, Maguire was an active Socialist before the age of 20 and the pioneer of Socialism in Leeds. He formed the Leeds branch of the SDF in 1884, but the branch went over to the Socialist League in 1885. Maguire was a member of the first provisional Council of the SL, helped to organise the 1889 building labourers' strike in Leeds, and was one of the founders of the ILP. He died of pneumonia in March 1895, at the age of 30.

TOM MANN, 1856-1941.

Born in Coventry, the son of a colliery clerk, Mann went to work down the pit at the age of 9. He moved to Birmingham in 1870, became a foundry apprentice and attended a number of technical and bible classes. Here he gained experience as a speaker on temperance. In 1877 he moved to London, joined the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in 1881 and became converted, via Henry George, to land nationalisation. Mann

joined the SDF in 1885, acted as organiser in the North-East and in Bolton, but became disillusioned with the leadership of the party. He was active in the Dock Strike, became general secretary of the ILP in 1894, played a leading part in the establishment of the Workers' Union and was a member of the Royal Commission on Labour. After acting as organiser for the National Democratic League, a non-Socialist radical reform movement, from 1900-01, he left for an 8 year stay in Australia and New Zealand. He returned to Britain in 1910 and rejoined the SDF, but his advocacy of Industrial Unionism soon led to a further breach with the party. He formed the Industrial Syndicalist Education League, published the Industrial Syndicalist, and was at, or near, the centre of many of the episodes of labour unrest 1910-14. Mann joined the British Socialist Party in 1916 after its break with Hyndman, was a foundation member of the Communist Party, and was a delegate to the first conference of revolutionary trade unions - the Red International of Labour Unions - and to the Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. He was General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers 1921-23, carrying through the amalgamation to the A.E.U., chairman of the National Minority Movement 1924-32, and active in the unemployed campaigns of the 1930s. His career encompassed many of the strands of the Socialist movement in this country.

DORA MONTEFIORE , 1851-1934.

Born into a ruling class Surrey family Dora married a wealthy Australian Jewish man. Upon his death she returned to Europe, worked in Paris helping Russian refugees and then in Britain joined the Womens' Liberal League and the National Association of Womens' Suffrage Societies. She joined the SDF in the 1890s and in 1898 toured on a Clarion Van with George Belt, the Hull ILP organiser. This caused a scandal in the ILP, for Belt was a married man with children, and when their relationship continued Belt was sacked by the Hull ILP. The repercussions of the episode were widespread: Dora was refused permission to read a paper at the International Womens' Congress in 1899 and the LRC Executive refused to sanction Belt's candidature for Hammersmith in 1906. There was a marked difference between ILP and SDF attitudes, for the SDF gave Belt a job as their Scottish organiser. Meanwhile, after suffering imprisonment for her suffrage activities, Dora travelled abroad to Italy and the U.S.A. She had resigned from the SDF Executive, to which she had been elected in 1904, because of its attitude to the suffragettes but on her return to this country became active in the party again and was on the BSP Executive. After further foreign travel, including three years in Australia and a tour of South Africa, she was a BSP delegate to the founding conference of the CPGB. Elected to the party's Executive in 1920 she was also International Secretary of the First International Conference of Communist Women and acted as Australian Communist Party

delegate to the 1924 Moscow Congress.

WILLIAM MORRIS, 1834-1896.

Morris was born in 1834 at Walthamstow, and educated at Marlborough and Exeter College, Oxford. He was, briefly, pupil to an architect but after meeting Rossetti he was encouraged to paint and to write. He published several volumes of poetry, started an interior decorating business, established the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and produced a series of fine books from his Kelmscott Press. Morris was appalled by the evils of industrialisation and turned to Socialism as part of his crusade against the materialism and ugliness of Victorian England. From the moment he joined the SDF Morris changed his whole way of life, taking an active part in all aspects of the Federation's work, and giving generous financial contributions to the cause. He led the opposition to Hyndman, feeling that the duty of Socialists at that stage was 'to make Socialists'. He made the Socialist League's weekly journal, Commonweal, the outstanding Socialist magazine of its time. After the demise of the Socialist League Morris formed the Hammersmith Socialist Society, but he was reconciled to the SDF and worked closely with it on many occasions. His last lecture before his death had as its subject 'One Socialist Party', to which he had devoted his last years.

W. J. NAIRN, ?-1901.

A stone breaker by trade, Nairn was an original member of

the Glasgow SDF, and on the SDF Executive in 1895, 1896, 1898 and 1899. He contributed the 'Sandy MacFarlane' column to Justice in the mid-1890s. Nairn was a teetotaler and an active member of the Co-operative movement. 'He, more than any other', said Bruce Glasier, 'was the founder and pioneer of the Social-Democratic Federation in Scotland'.

CONRAD NOEL, 1869-1942.

Conrad Noel joined the Guild of St. Matthew, the Church Socialist group, in 1895, and the SDF soon after. He was ordained in 1898. In July 1906 he formed, with others, the Church Socialist League, a more avowedly Socialist movement than the Guild of St. Matthew and one more directly involved in the Labour movement. The failure of the Labour Party to make an impact in parliament led him into the BSP, and he was on the Executive in 1912. He resigned over the issue of syndicalism and turned towards Guild Socialism, being present at the founding conference of the National Guilds League in 1915 and on its Executive from 1920-22. Noel was famous as the 'red' vicar of Thaxted from 1910-42, and there he put into practice his principles of Social-Democratic Catholicism, bringing the social gospel to the common people.

HARRY QUELCH, 1858-1913.

Quelch was born in Hungerford, Berkshire. A self-educated man, he entered politics as a Conservative, in association with George Shipton, secretary of the London Trades Council, but he became a Socialist and joined the SDF. He was editor

of Justice from 1886-1913, apart from a brief period in the aftermath of the Dock Strike when he was organising the South Side Labour Protection League. Quelch was an unsuccessful parliamentary candidate on four occasions, but he was widely respected for his sincerity and ability, even by his political opponents. He was an influential figure in the SDF, usually a loyal supporter of Hyndman but on some issues to the left of him. His opposition to the Labour Party swayed many members into opposing SDF affiliation to that body. Quelch achieved notoriety at the Stuttgart conference of the International in 1907, where he referred to the Hague Peace Conference as a 'thieves supper' and was expelled from Wurtemberg for refusing to apologise.

THEODORE ROTHSTEIN, 1871-1953.

Rothstein was born in Lithuania, but moved to the Ukraine two years later. His membership of a Socialist study group brought him to police attention and he arrived in Britain in 1891. After two years in Leeds he moved to London and joined the SDF's Hackney and Kingsland branch. He quickly rose to prominence as an opponent of Hyndman, urging an internationalist view and pleading for the SDF to abandon its sectarian attitudes. He was on the Executive 1901-06, but thereafter concentrated on journalism, and wrote frequent articles in Justice attacking Hyndman's jingoism. Rothstein resigned from the BSP upon the outbreak of war, to avoid internment as an alien, but he continued to participate

informally and was close to the anti-war group. Under the pseudonym of John Bryan he was a regular contributor to The Call. After the October Revolution Rothstein was the chief Bolshevik agent in Britain and played a key role in the negotiations leading to the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain. He returned to Russia in August 1920.

ANDREAS SCHEU, 1844-1927.

Scheu was a Viennese furniture designer, active in German anarchist politics before coming to London in 1874. He joined the SDF, but animosity between himself and Hyndman was a contributory factor to the SDF/SL split. Scheu was a close friend of William Morris, an effective speaker and a writer of Socialist songs. He moved to Edinburgh in 1885 to become a salesman for Jaeger, and returned to Germany in 1911.

JOHN SCURR, 1876-1932.

Scurr was born in Australia but grew up and spent most of his working life in Poplar. He joined the SDF in the late 1890s, was a member of the Poplar Labour League from 1897, and also president of the Poplar Trades and Labour Representation Council. He was on the SDF Executive in 1910. Scurr was conspicuous in the dock strike of 1910-11 and a prominent supporter of the suffrage movement. In 1921 he was one of the Guardians imprisoned for refusing to collect the rates. He served as mayor of Poplar 1922-23, and was elected Labour M.P. for Stepney Mile End in 1923. He held the seat until 1931 and died in the following year.

FRED SHAW, 1881-1951.

Born in Lindley, near Huddersfield, Fred Shaw attended the local elementary school. His first job was in the blacksmith's shop of a local woollen mill. By 1903 he was secretary of the Lindley LRC, and in 1905 was a founder member of the Clarion Cycling Club and the Huddersfield Socialist Party. He became the first agent in Britain for Kerr and Co., the Chicago publishers. Shaw was one of the BSP's national propagandists and a keen advocate of industrial unionism. He was elected to the BSP Executive in 1916, stood as Socialist candidate for Greenock in 1918, and was on the first Executive of the British Communist Party. From 1919-22 he was a councillor for Longwood Ward. After 1923 Fred Shaw became a loyal Labour Party man, and was Yorkshire organiser for the National Council of Labour Colleges. He was intensely interested in scientific matters, lecturing widely on evolution, astronomy, sociology etc. Shaw typifies the pre-war working-class Socialist of the SDF/BSP type.

H. RUSSELL SMART, 1858-?

Born in London and educated at Dulwich College, Smart served a brief career in a solicitor's office and was, for 10 years, an actor. Thereafter he worked as a sanitary engineer. He joined both the ILP and the SDF, was ILP candidate for Huddersfield in 1895, and later on the NAC of the ILP. Smart was a signatory to the 'Green Manifesto', a founder member of the BSP, and on its Executive 1911-12. He left the party

over its attitude towards syndicalism, but was a member of the reformed SDF in 1923.

WILL THORNE, 1857-1946.

Thorne's father was a brickmaker and gasworker, and Thorne himself was working a 12 hour day at the age of six for a rope and twine spinner. A variety of labouring jobs followed. His arduous childhood left a lasting impression on Thorne, and turned him towards Socialism. He went on the tramp in 1875, eventually arriving at Beckton gasworks, London, in 1882. He joined the SDF and was instrumental in the formation of the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers. Thorne was General Secretary of the Union for 45 years, on the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC 1894-1921, and on the General Council 1921-33. He was M.P. for West Ham South 1906-18, and for Plaistow 1918-45. His membership of the LRC and then the Labour Party, by virtue of the Gasworkers' affiliation, led to some friction with the SDF. Yet Thorne remained a member long after its influence had declined and long after he had moved to the right-wing of the Labour Party.

BEN TILLET, 1860-1943.

Born in Bristol, Tillet had a childhood of extreme poverty. After a spell in the merchant navy, he founded the Tea Operatives and General Labourers' Association on the London docks in 1887. His role in the dockers' strike of 1889 raised him to national prominence and he became General Secretary of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union,

a position he held until 1922. Tillet's politics were somewhat mercurial: he was, at various times, an ILP parliamentary candidate, a member of the SDF/BSP Executive, a fund-raiser for the Daily Herald, and a prominent syndicalist. During the war he was a member of the SNDC and active in recruiting campaigns. Thereafter he moved steadily to the right. He was M.P. for North Salford 1917-24 and 1929-31, but largely inactive after that.

FRANCES EVELYN (DAISY), COUNTESS OF WARWICK, 1861-1938.

Born in Mayfair, of distinguished parents, in 1881 she married Lord Brooke, who became Earl of Warwick in 1893. Although in the top rank of society she initiated a number of philanthropic schemes to help alleviate rural unemployment and was elected to the Warwick Guardians in 1894, where she served for a decade. When Robert Blatchford wrote a biting critique of her lifestyle she sought him out, and the subsequent discussion marked a turning point in her intellectual development. She read Socialist literature, had grave doubts about the Boer War, and joined the SDF in November 1904. In her own way she worked hard for the cause, giving generous financial contributions and always attracting curious crowds. Her main energy was devoted to the campaign for free meals for schoolchildren, and she also provided Socialist clergymen such as Conrad Noel with Essex livings of which she was a patron. She was anti-war, supported the Bolshevik Revolution, but joined the Labour Party after the war.

J. HUNTER WATTS, ?-1923.

A refugee from Secularism, Hunter Watts was an early and lifelong member of the SDF. He became treasurer of the party when Morris's group seceded, but always remained on friendly terms with Morris. In the late 1880s he was SDF organiser in Manchester. Watts was a member of the SDF Executive 1895-96, 1902-06 and 1911. A loyal Hyndmanite, he followed Hyndman into the National Socialist Party in 1916. He was also an early advocate of Socialist Sunday Schools.

JOHN ('JACK') WILLIAMS, 1854?-1917.

Born in Holloway, North London, Williams was raised in a succession of workhouses. His childhood experiences of poverty and deprivation gave him an undying hatred of the capitalist system. In the early 1870s he was a passionate supporter of Irish nationalism. He joined the Rose Street Club in 1879, then the Democratic Federation, where he became a fervent Hyndman loyalist. Williams played a prominent part in the free speech agitation, serving two prison terms which permanently affected his health. Although twice a parliamentary candidate, and on the Federation's Executive in 1884, 1895 and 1896, his chief value was as a street corner propagandist. He was an active organiser of new unionism, but his major contribution to the SDF was as an organiser of the unemployed. His prison sentences and his reputation made it very difficult for him to find work, and

his ceaseless political activity allied to his poverty finally broke his health. Williams was one of whom it can truly be said 'he gave his life to the movement'.

APPENDIX B.

SDF/BSP MUNICIPAL ELECTION RESULTS 1890-1913.

1. LANCASHIRE.

I. BLACKBURN.¹

YEAR	WARD	NO. OF VOTES			SDF % VOTE	NO. OF CLLRS.
		CON	LIB	SDF		
1892	St. Paul's	626	-	268	30	-
1893	St. Paul's	690	488	269	18.6	-
1894	St. Paul's	-	706	323	31.4	-
1895		NO CONTESTS				
1896	St. Paul's	707	-	570	46.5	-
1897	St. Paul's	-	633	627	49.8	-
	St. Peter's	-	706	299	29.7	
1898	St. Paul's	533	-	799	60	1
	St. Peter's	-	672	325	32.6	
	St. Luke's	618	-	382	38.2	
1899	St. Paul's	404	467	652	42.8	2
	St. Luke's	699	-	461	39.7	
1900	St. Paul's	-	912	513	36	2
	St. Andrew's	788	-	269	25.4	
1901	St. Paul's	703	-	702	50	2
	St. Luke's	552	-	430	43.8	
1902	St. Silas	705	-	120	14.5	1
	St. Michael's	763	-	209	21.5	
	St. Andrew's	702	-	402	36.4	

			1900	1901	% VOTE	CLLRS.
	St. Mark's	-	744	453	37.8	
	St. Paul's	701	-	778	52.6	
	St. Luke's	605	-	579	48.9	
1903	St. Andrew's	760	-	446	37	2
	St. Mark's	741	-	353	32.3	
	St. Paul's	776	-	750	49.1	
	St. Luke's	583	-	722	57	
1904	St. Mark's	832	-	393	32.1	3
	St. Paul's	-	789	729	48	
	St. Luke's	622	-	707	53.2	
1905	St. Mark's	812	-	541	40	4
	St. Paul's	650	-	938	59	
	St. Luke's	699	-	710 ²	50.4	
1906	St. Mark's	1068	-	396	27	3
	St. Paul's	1038	-	713	40.7	
	St. Luke's	925	-	568	38	
1907	St. Mark's	1048	-	361	34.4	2
	St. Paul's	-	1155	486	42.1	
	St. John's	797	635	153	9.7	
	St. Luke's	867	-	496	36.4	
1908	St. Mark's	1078	-	543	33.5	-
	St. Paul's	1080	-	748	40.9	
	St. Luke's	826	-	662	44.5	
1909	St. Paul's	991	-	718	42	-
	St. Luke's	820	-	687	45.6	
1910	St. Mark's	868	531	315	18.4	-

YEAR	WARD	CON	LIB	SDF	SDF % VOTE	NO. OF CLLRS.
	St. Paul's	-	965	322	25	
	St. Luke's	815	-	595	42.2	
1911	St. Mark's	952	677	200	10.9	-
	St. Paul's	888	828	130	7	
	St. Luke's	729	445	319	21.4	
1912	St. Luke's	774	-	502	39.3	-
1913	St. Luke's	795	-	512	39.2	-

1. By-elections are not included, which explains the discrepancy between the election results and the number of SDF councillors in some years.
2. The SDF now held all three seats in St. Luke's Ward. This and St. Paul's were the SDF strongholds in Blackburn, and as late as 1913 the SDF polled nearly 40 per cent of the vote there.

ii. BURNLEY.¹

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>WARD</u>	<u>CON</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>SDF</u>	<u>SDF % VOTE.</u>	<u>NO. OF CLLRS.</u>
1892	Stoneyholme	-	469	-	193	29.2	
	Burnley Wood	702	-	-	320	31.3	
1893	Stoneyholme	313	329	-	240	27.2	1
	Fulledge	410	197	-	385	38.8	
	Burnley Wood	-	561	-	688	55.1	
	Trinity	534	304	-	279	25.	
	Whittlefield	329	306	-	181	22.2	
	Burnley Wood ²	376	555	-	582	38.5	2
	Healey ¹	383	379	-	104	12.	
	Gannow ¹	411	370	-	206	20.9	
1894	Danehouse	-	867	-	430	33.2	1
	Whittlefield	315	414	-	123	14.4	
	Stoneyholme	387	438	-	143	14.8	
	Fulledge	752	-	-	232	23.6	
	Burnley Wood	472	675	-	460	28.6	
	Trinity	652	-	-	299	31.4	
1895	Stoneyholme	343	461	-	164	16.9	1
	Burnley Wood	628	641	-	321	20.2	
1896	Burnley Wood	522	757	-	205	13.8	-
	Fulledge	607	-	-	449	42.5	
1897	Danes House	-	604	-	517	46.1	-
	Burnley Wood	-	788	-	382	32.6	
	Gannow	459	476	-	255	21.4	

1898	Danes House	-	873	-	405	31.7	-
	Burnley Wood	-	789	-	487	38.2	
	Gannow	513	427	-	255	21.3	
1899	Gannow	529	406	-	258	21.6	-
1900	NO CONTESTS.						
1901	Gannow	579	-	-	533	47.9	-
1902	Gannow	540	-	-	746	58.	1
1903	Burnley Wood	-	890	-	654	42.4	1
1904	NO SDF CONTESTS.						
1905 ³	Burnley Wood	-	749	-	800	51.6	1
	Whittlefield	343	338	-	300	30.6	
	Gannow	-	779	-	736	48.6	
1906 ⁴	Danes House*	-	785	-	511	39.4	2
	Stoneyholme	-	549	-	397	42.	
	St. Peter's*	607	-	-	168	21.7	
	St. Paul's*	624	-	-	214	29.	
	Fulledge	870	-	-	374	30.1	
	Healey	415	523	-	163	14.8	
	Trinity	727	-	-	341	31.9	
	Gannow*	470	499	-	625	39.2	
	Lowerhouse	489	618	-	430	28.	
1907 ⁴	Danes House	-	913	-	566	38.3	2
	Stoneyholme	-	484	-	470	49.3	
	St. Peter's*	534	-	-	153	22.3	
	St. Paul's	454	-	-	239	34.5	
	Fulledge*	816	-	-	304	27.1	
	Healey	-	662	-	278	29.6	

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>WARD</u>	<u>CON</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>SDF</u>	<u>SDF % VOTE.</u>	<u>NO. OF CLLRS.</u>
1908 ⁴	Trinity	711	-	-	376	34.6	2
	Whittlefield	-	577	-	299	34.1	
	Gannow*	851	-	-	622	42.2	
	Lowerhouse	755	-	-	507	40.2	
	St. Andrew's	-	1459	-	751	34.	
	Danes House*	-	957	-	497	34.2	
	Stoneyholme	-	640	-	401	38.5	
	St. Peter's	695	-	-	159	18.6	
	St. Paul's*	940	-	-	348	27.	
	Fulledge*	940	-	-	736	43.9	
1908	Healey*	-	820	-	232	22.	2
	Trinity	804	-	-	356	30.7	
	Whittlefield ⁵	564	-	Ind.	-	-	
				Soc.			
				196			
				LRC.			
				128			
	Gannow	-	876	-	568	39.3	
	Lowerhouse	364	745		461	29.4	
	Stoneyhouse	-	552	-	334	37.7	
1909	Burnley Wood	-	832	-	544	39.5	2
	Gannow	423	485	SPGB	670	42.4	
				4			
1910	Stoneyholme	432	407	-	211	20.1	2
	Fulledge	676	-	-	290	30.	
	Burnley Wood	673	567	-	454	26.8	

<u>YEAR</u>		<u>CON</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>SDF</u>	<u>SDF % VOTE.</u>	<u>NO. OF CLLRS.</u>
	Trinity	600	-	-	369	38.1	
	Whittlefield	-	584	-	231	28.3	
	Gannow ⁶	505	403	-	505	35.7	
1911	St. Andrew's	-	1168	ILP 538	387	18.5	2
	BurnleyWood	701	633	-	418	23.9	
	Trinity	594	-	-	370	38.4	
	Gannow	695	418	-	588	34.6	
1912	St. Andrew's	-	1249	-	487	28.1	2
	BurnleyWood	687	784		325	18.1	
	Trinity	574	-	-	297	34.1	
	Gannow		NO CONTEST		RE-		
					ELECTED		
1913	Fulledge	750	619	-	314	18.7	2
	Gannow	614	-	-	791	56.3	

1. By-elections are not included, other than those for 1893, which explains the discrepancy between the election results and the number of SDF councillors in some years.
2. By-elections.
3. A Labour Representation Committee was formed in this year and the SDF fought the elections under the LRC banner.
4. In 1906, 1907 and 1908 all candidates ran under the LRC's auspices. The local press regarded the LRC as a 'front' for the SDF and therefore referred to all candidates as Socialists. Consequently, it is difficult

to differentiate SDF candidates from those of the ILP and the Trades Council. Where candidates are known to have been put forward by the ILP or Trades Council those results are omitted; those marked with an asterisk are definitely SDF candidates; the credentials of the other LRC candidates are unclear, but their results are entered in the SDF column.

5. In the Whittlefield ward in 1908 dissident SDFers, dissatisfied with the alliance with the unions, put up a candidate against the LRC. Backed by some ILPers, they pushed the LRC candidate into third place.
6. After the tied vote in Gannow ward in 1910 the Presiding Officer gave his casting vote to the retiring Conservative councillor.

iii. NELSON²

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>WARD</u>	<u>CON</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SDF</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>SDF</u> <u>% VOTE.</u>
1892	Bradley	-	315	163	-	34.1
1893	Central	-	?	202	-	?
	Bradley	-	416	157	-	27.4
	Central ¹	-	420	263	-	38.5
1894	Bradley	170	314	239	-	33.1
1896	Netherfield	340	257	43	-	6.7
1899	Southfield	-	349	254	-	42.1
	Bradley	-	419	270	-	39.2
1901	Bradley	202	473	264	-	28.1
1902	Bradley	-	368	360	-	49.5
1907	Bradley	-	402	167	-	29.3
	Southfield	-	346	120	438	13.3
	Netherfield	-	-	193	498	27.9
1908	Netherfield	540	-	103	584	8.4
1911	Southfield	352	-	111	593	10.5
	Netherfield	496	-	112	543	9.7
1912	Southfield	-	613	342	-	35.8

1. By-election.

2. The above contests are those where identifiable SDF candidates went to the polls. Some may have stood as Labour candidates prior to 1902.

iv. ROCHDALE

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>WARD</u>	<u>CON</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SDF</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>SDF % VOTE</u>	<u>NO. OF CLLRS</u>
1890	Castleton E.	797	613	21	-	1.5	-
	Spotland E.	560	605	22	-	1.9	
	Wardleworth E.	421	-	78	-	15.6	
1891	NO SDF CANDIDATES						-
1892	Wardleworth E.	-	522	158	-	23.2	-
1893	Wardleworth E.	381	-	117	-	23.5	-
1894	Wardleworth W.	-	365	276	-	43.1	-
1895	Wardleworth E.	-	431	104	-	19.4	-
	Wardleworth W.	-	377	120	-	24.1	
1896	Wardleworth W.	-	450	173	-	27.8	-
1897	NO SDF CANDIDATES						-
1898	Wardleworth W.	-	399	478	-	54.5	1
1899	Wardleworth W.	-	534	368	-	40.8	1
1900	Wardleworth S.	570	700	179	-	12.4	1
	Castleton ¹						
		521)	640)	295	-	8.	
	Moor))				
))				
		496)	554)				
))				
		461)	487)				
1901	Wuerdle	-	649	180	-	14.	1
	Wardleworth W.		SDF UNOPPOSED				
1902	Castleton E.	786	665	210	-	12.6	1
	Wuerdle	501	632	112	-	9.	
1903	Wardleworth E.	-	467	235	-	33.5	1
	Spotland E. ²	-	680	222	-	24.6	

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>WARD</u>	<u>CON</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SDF</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>SDF % VOTE</u>	<u>NO. OF CLLRS</u>
	Spotland E. ²	647	655	88	-	6.3	
	Castleton E. ²	782	725	153	-	9.2	
1904	Castleton S.	-	800	646	-	44.7	-
	Wardleworth S.	369	-	455	Labour	33.2	
					546		
	Wardleworth S. ²	-	778	627	-	44.6	
	Wardleworth S.		SDF	UNOPPOSED			
1905	Castleton S.	743	721	442	-	23.2	2
	Wardleworth S.	-	797	509	-	39.	
	Wardleworth E.	-	553	349	-	38.7	
	Wardleworth W.	-	556	565 ³	-	50.4	
	Castleton S. ²	400	737	499	-	30.5	
1906	Castleton E.	770	-	410	-	34.7	2
War	Wardleworth S.	-	679	625 ³	-	47.9	
	Castleton	-	513	557	-	52.1	
	Moor						
1907	Wardleworth W.	496	320	300	-	26.9	1 ⁴
	Castleton E.	968	-	318	-	24.7	
	Castleton	943	-	463	-	32.9	
	Moor						
1908	Wardleworth S.	-	810	723	-	47.2	-
	Wardleworth W.	593	-	500 ³	-	45.7	
1909	Castleton	-	786	747 ³	-	48.5	-
	Moor						
	Wardleworth W. ⁵	?	?	?	-	18.	
1910	Castleton E.	848	-	514	-	37.7	
	Wardleworth E.	-	-	187	Ind.Lab.	26.6	
					516		

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>WARD</u>	<u>CON</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SDF</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>SDF % VOTE</u>	<u>NO. OF CLLRS.</u>
	Wardleworth W.	372	457	329 ³	-	28.4	
	Wuerdle	-	727	395	-	35.2	
	Wuerdle ²	495	668	260	-	18.3	
1911	Wardleworth W.	354	390	268	Labour	22.	-
					208		
1912	Wardleworth S.	-	722	233	-	24.4	-
1913	Wardleworth W.	-	601	314	-	34.3	-

1. This was a new ward, created by boundary re-organisation, and therefore three councillors were to be elected.
2. By-elections.
3. Stood as a Labour candidate.
4. The SDF member who won Wardleworth West in 1905 had subsequently left the party.
5. I have been unable to trace the figures for this contest, which was probably a by-election. However Robert W. Garner, in his dissertation Municipalism in Rochdale 1880-1914, records the percentage of votes cast for each candidate as follows: Conservative 35%, Liberal 47%, SDF 18%.

2. YORKSHIRE.

i. BRADFORD¹

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>WARD</u>	<u>CON</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>SDF</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>SDF % VOTE</u>
1905	Bradford Moor	946	808	1207 ²	-	40.8
1906	E. Bowling	1074	890	634	-	24.4
1907	E. Bowling	1374	-	697	-	33.7
	E. Bowling ³	-	954	702	Independent	31.7
					559	
1908	E. Bowling	-	1355	799	-	37.1
	South Ward	993	732	301	-	14.9
1909	E. Bowling	1136	-	816	-	41.8
	South Ward	800	865	230	-	12.1
1910	E. Bowling	742	911	560	-	25.3
	East Ward	1268	-	350	-	21.6
	E. Bowling ³	859	910	662	-	27.2
1911	E. Bowling	861	1022	579	-	23.5
	East Ward	1126	1242	318	-	11.8
	Tong ⁴	475	587	296	-	21.8
1912-						
13 ⁵						

1. Although both Edward Hartley and C. A. Glyde were elected to the council at various times, neither stood as SDF candidates and their success was largely due to their ILP associations. Hartley was a far more prominent SDF member than Glyde.

2. E. R. Hartley was elected on an ILP ticket, although shortly afterwards he stood as SDF parliamentary candidate for Bradford East.
3. By-elections.
4. Tong had been held by C. A. Glyde since 1904. Glyde was a dual ILP/SDF member, but was very much an individualist Socialist with a strong personal following in Tong. He did not stand in 1911 but regained the seat in 1913. No other Socialist candidate, whether of the ILP or SDF, could win the seat until the Labour successes of 1919 and 1922.
5. Although two BSP members, F. L. Liles and Glyde, were elected to the council in 1913 they were both long-serving ILP members and their success was not due to their membership of the BSP. These results are therefore omitted.

ii. DEWSBURY.

In Dewsbury candidates did not stand under party labels
therefore the results are tabulated differently.

<u>1902</u>	<u>All Saints</u>	F. Newsome	486	
	<u>Ward</u>	R. Machell	463	
		H. Wood (SDF)	201	<u>SDF % vote - 17.5</u>
<u>1903</u>	<u>Trinity Ward</u>	G. Thorpe	544	
		H. Wood (SDF)	191	<u>SDF % vote - 26.</u>
	<u>All Saints</u>	E. Marsh	434	
	<u>Ward</u>	S. Teale	368	
		J. Kershaw	317	
		H. Wood (SDF)	142	<u>SDF % vote - 11.3</u>
<u>1910</u>	<u>Trinity South</u>	G.W. Ibbotson	848)	
	<u>Ward</u>	J.E. Kilburn	777))elected
		S.M. Oldroyd	625	
		M Day	483	
		F. Reuss	457	
		H. Wood (SDF)	147	<u>SDF % vote - 4.3</u>
		J. Brook	54	

iii. LEEDS.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>WARD</u>	<u>CON</u>	<u>LIB</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>SDF</u>	<u>SDF</u> <u>% VOTE</u>
1909	New Wortley	810	890	800	168	6.3
1910	New Wortley	630	937	575	84	3.8
1911	North-West	1971	1613	-	478	11.8
	Ward					

APPENDIX C.

SDF/BSP/NSP PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION RESULTS, 1885-1924.

i)	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CANDIDATES</u> <u>(M.P.s)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>VOTES</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u> <u>VOTE</u>	<u>AVERAGE %</u> <u>OF VOTE</u>
SDF ↓	1885	3	657	219	2.2
	1892	2	659	330	4.8
	*1892-5	1	347	347	6.8
	1895	4	3,730	781	8.4
	*1895-1900	2	544	272	2.8
	1900	2	6,997	3,499	40.5
	*1900-1906	1	1,597	1,597	13.6
	1906	8	21,974	2,306	16.9
	*1906-1910	3	4,233	1,411	10.2
	(JAN)				
↓	1910 (JAN)	9	15,184	1,498	11.8
	1910 (DEC)	2	5,711	2,856	19.2
BSP	*1910-1918	3	4,536	1,512	11.1
	(DEC)				
BSP	1918	16	71,762	4,485	21.1
NSP	1918	4 (2)	26,230	6,588	28.3
SDF	*1918-1922	1 (1)	11,674	11,674	53.4
↓	1922	2 (1)	29,474	14,737	43.9
	1923	5 (4)	58,612	11,722	43.5
	1924	4 (3)	43,498	10,875	42.9

(1)* = by-election results.

- (2) The SDF election results 1906-18 do not include those of Will Thorne, who stood as a Labour Party candidate. They therefore differ from the Federation's own claims.
- (3) After 1924 the SDF, presumably through lack of finance, ceased to sponsor parliamentary candidates.
- (4) After 1916 the SDF(NSP) was affiliated to the Labour Party, as was the BSP for the 1918 elections. In 1918 12 of the 16 BSP candidates were endorsed by the Labour Party and one by the Co-operative Party. One of the NSP candidates had Labour Party endorsement and one joined the Labour Party shortly after his election. Thereafter all candidates had Labour Party endorsement.

ii. SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION ELECTION RESULTS 1885-1924.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CONSTITUENCY</u>	<u>CANDIDATE</u>	<u>VOTES</u>	<u>% OF VOTES</u>
1885	Hampstead	J.E. Williams	27	0.6
	Lambeth, Kennington	J. Fielding	32	0.5
	Nottingham, West	J. Burns	598	5.4
1892	Bethnal Green, N.E.	H.R. Taylor	106	2.0
	Salford, South	W.K. Hall	553	7.5
*1895	Newington, Walworth	G. Lansbury	347	6.8
1895	Newington, Walworth	G. Lansbury	203	3.8
	Burnley	H.M. Hyndman	1,498	12.4
	Northampton (2)	F.G. Jones	1,216	6.7
	Salford, South	H.W. Hobart	813	10.8
*1896	Southampton	C.A. Gibson	274	2.4
*1898	Reading	H. Quelch	270	3.1
1900	Tower Hamlets, Bow and Bromley	G. Lansbury ¹	2,558	36.7
	West Ham, South	W.J. Thorne ¹	4,439	44.2
*1902	Dewsbury	H. Quelch	1,597	13.6
1906	Bradford, East	E.R. Hartley	3,090	22.8
	Burnley	H.M. Hyndman	4,932	32.5
	Northampton (2)	J.E. Williams	2,544	11.7
	Northampton (2)	J. Gribble	2,366	10.9
	Southampton (2)	H. Quelch	2,146	8.0
	Camborne	J.J. Jones	109	1.5
	Accrington	D.D. Irving	4,852	38.3
	Aberdeen, North	T. Kennedy	1,935	25.1

<u>CONSTITUENCY</u>	<u>CANDIDATE</u>	<u>VOTES</u>	<u>% OF VOTES</u>
Manchester, N.W.	D.D. Irving	276	2.6
Shoreditch, Haggerston	H. Burrows	986	17.7
Newcastle upon Tyne	E.R. Hartley	2,971	10.4
Shoreditch, Haggerston	H. Burrows	701	11.1
Bradford, East	E.R. Hartley	1,740	12.0
Burnley	H.M. Hyndman	4,948	30.2
Carlisle	A.C. Bannington	777	11.3
Northampton (2)	J. Gribble	1,792	7.7
Northampton (2)	H. Quelch	1,617	7.0
Rochdale	D.D. Irving	1,755	12.6
Sheffield, Brightside	C. Lapworth	510.	4.7
Aberdeen, North	T. Kennedy	1,344	16.9
Burnley	H.M. Hyndman	3,810	23.8
Rochdale	D.D. Irving	1,901	14.5

FOR ELECTION RESULTS 1911-18 SEE UNDER BRITISH
SOCIALIST PARTY AND NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY.

Leith, Burghs	+T. Kennedy ¹	11,674	53.4
Burnley	+D.D. Irving ¹	17,385	39.1
Leith, Burghs	T. Kennedy ¹	12,089	48.6
Leith, South	+W.S. Cluse ¹	7,764	37.0
Leith, West	+F. Montague ¹	7,955	41.4
Burnley	+D.D. Irving ¹	16,848	37.8
Leith, Burghs	E.J. Pay ¹	11,824	47.0
Leith, Burghs	+T. Kennedy ¹	14,221	54.4

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CONSTITUENCY</u>	<u>CANDIDATE</u>	<u>VOTES</u>	<u>% OF VOTES</u>
1924	Islington, South	+W.S. Cluse ¹	10,347	42.8
	Islington, West	+F. Montague ¹	10,174	45.3
	Buckingham	E.J. Pay ¹	8,939	30.6
	Kirkcaldy Burghs	+T. Kennedy ¹	14,038	52.7

(1) *By-elections. ¹Endorsed by the Labour Party.
+Elected.

(2) Cluse, Kennedy and Montague were all re-elected in
1929, but were sponsored by their local Labour Parties.

(3) (2) = Two-member constituency.

iii. BRITISH SOCIALIST PARTY ELECTION RESULTS, 1911-18.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CONSTITUENCY</u>	<u>CANDIDATE</u>	<u>VOTES</u>	<u>% OF VOTES</u>
*1913	Leicester	E.R. Hartley	2,580	11.4
*1913	Reading	J.G. Butler	1,063	10.4
*1914	Tower Hamlets, Poplar	J.J. Jones	893	11.6
1918	Islington, North	J. Arnall ¹	4,000	19.3
	Bradford, South	W. Hirst ²	8,291	30.9
	Edmonton	F.A. Broad	3,575	25.7
	Great Yarmouth	W. McConnell	1,845	12.8
	Grimsby	C.E. Franklin	9,015	33.7
	Hastings	J.G. Butler	3,556	24.1
	Portsmouth, Central	H. Hinshelwood	4,004	19.1
	Salford, South	J. Gorman	3,807	19.0
	Sheffield, Central	R.G. Murray ¹	643	4.0
	Sheffield, Park	A. Barton	3,167	20.4
	Southampton (2)	T. Lewis	7,828	10.6
	Walthamstow, West	V.L.T. McEntee	4,167	29.3
	Glasgow, Gorbals	J. Maclean	7,436	34.3
	Glasgow, Tradeston	J.D. MacDougall ¹	3,751	19.4
	Greenock	F. Shaw	2,542	11.2
	Motherwell	J.T.W. Newbold	4,135	23.2

(1) *By-elections.

(2) ¹Without official Labour Party endorsement.

(3) ²Co-operative Party candidate.

(4) (2) = two-member constituency.

iv. NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY ELECTION RESULTS, 1918.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CONSTITUENCY</u>	<u>CANDIDATE</u>	<u>VOTES</u>	<u>% OF VOTES</u>
1918	Burnley	+D.D. Irving ¹	15,217	41.9
	Reading	L.E. Quelch	1,462	5.2
	West Ham, Silvertown	+J.J. Jones ²	6,971	51.6
	Romford	A. Whiting	2,580	14.4

(1) +Elected.

(2) ¹With Labour Party endorsement.

(3) ²Joined the Labour Party, February 1919.

SOURCE OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION RESULTS: F. W. S. Craig,
British Parliamentary Election Results 1885-1918, (1974), and
Minor Parties at British Elections 1885-1974, (1975).

APPENDIX D.

YORKSHIRE BRANCHES OF THE SDF 1884-1911.

Batley,	1902-04; 1908-10.
Bingley,	1895.
Birkenshaw,	1907-1911.
Bolton-upon-De arne,	1909-11.
Bradford,	1895-97; 1904-11. ¹
Charlestown,	1900-06; 1908-11.
Dewsbury,	1897-1911.
Earby,	1893; 1903.
Earlsheaton,	1908-09.
Gomersal,	1911.
Halifax,	1895-96; 1909-11.
Hull,	1884-85; 1894-96; 1899; 1902-11.
Keighley,	1907-10.
Leeds,	1884-85; 1894-1911. ²
Low Bentham,	1895-98.
Ravensthorpe,	1902.
Rotherham,	1907-11.
Sheffield,	1885; 1888; 1891; 1893-98; ³ 1899-1900; 1904-1911. ⁴
Skipton,	1897-98; 1900-02.

1. From 1909 there were two Bradford branches.

2. There was a continuous SDF presence in Leeds between 1894 and 1911. The Armley branch existed throughout this period and, at various times, was augmented by others, to a maximum of five. In 1911 there were four Leeds branches.

3. For a short period of time, 1893-94, there were four branches in Sheffield.
4. From 1904-06 there were two Sheffield branches, Brightside and Crookes.

APPENDIX E.

YORKSHIRE ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTED AT THE
SOCIALIST UNITY CONFERENCE, MANCHESTER, 1911.

Bingley BSP.

Birkenshaw SDF.

Bradford Clarion Cycling Club.

Bradford SDF.

Burley ILP.

Clayton BSP.

Colne Valley Socialist League.

Dewsbury BSP.

Doncaster BSP.

Farsley Clarion Cycling Club.

Gomersal SDF.

Hebden Bridge Socialist League.

Heckmondwike and District Socialist Society.

Huddersfield Socialist Party.

Hull SDF.

Keighley Socialist Society.

Leeds BSP.

Leeds Clarion Scouts.

Middlesbrough BSP.

North Leeds SDF.

Sheffield BSP.

Sheffield SDF.

Skipton BSP.

Wakefield ILP.

West Leeds SDF.

York BSP.

Yorkshire Union of Clarion Cycling Clubs.

APPENDIX F.

YORKSHIRE BRANCHES OF THE BSP.

Exact details of BSP branches in Yorkshire are difficult to assess. The Clarion ceased publication of BSP notes in 1913, Justice was reduced in size after the outbreak of war in 1914 and branch reports were therefore curtailed, and branches often could not afford to send delegates to the party's Annual Conferences. The following list may therefore be incomplete, but where possible exact dates are given.

Adwick-le-Street,	1912.
Barnsley,	1912.
Bingley,	1911-12.
Birkenshaw,	1911-20.
Bolton-upon-Dearne,	1911-14(?)
Bradford,	1911-20. ¹
Charlestown,	1911.
Colne Valley,	1911-17(?).
Dewsbury,	1911-16.
Dinnington,	1912.
Doncaster,	1911.
Elland,	1911-18.
Farsley,	1911-13.
Gomersal,	1911.
Halifax,	1911-16.
Heckmondwike,	1911-16.
Huddersfield,	1911-20.

Hull,	1911-16(?)
Keighley,	1911-12.
Leeds,	1911-20. ²
Mexborough,	1911-12; 1914-18.
Middlesbrough	1911-14.
Ossett,	1912.
Rotherham,	1912.
Rothwell,	1912.
Sheffield,	1911-20.
Todmorden,	1911-15(?)
Wakefield,	1911-16(?)
York,	1912.

1. In 1912 Bradford had six BSP branches: Central, East, Dudley Hill and Tong, North Bierley, Clayton, and West Bowling. A reorganisation of branches in 1913 led to branches based on Manningham, Eccleshill, Great Horton, West Bowling, and East Ward. At least three of these still existed in 1916, at Eccleshill, Great Horton and East Ward, but by the end of the war Bradford had only one branch.
2. In 1912 Leeds had five BSP branches: Central, West, North, Burley and the Clarion Scouts. By 1914 there were two, Leeds West and Leeds West Ward, both of which were represented at the 1916 Annual Conference, but by 1918 only one branch remained.

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