Volume 2

CHAPTER V

"NEW PARTY" RADICALISM AND THE FOUNDING OF THE DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION 1881

VOL II.

In the volatile political atmosphere brought about by the violent drama of the Irish "Land War," growing public concern about poverty and social injustice, and a wave of radical revolt against the new Liberal Government, the year 1881 opened with talk of the need for a "new party" and even a "social revolution." Only a close inspection of the London radical scene reveals anything that could properly be called socialist activity at this time, but this would soon change. There were already a handful of socialists about -- still mostly European exiles representing a variety of revolutionary persuasions including Marxism, Lasalleism and anarchist-communism -- and they had begun to establish closer ties with radical London artisans. At least in the more militant and advanced of the metropolitan radical clubs the exiles were being invited to expound their theories and were finding some more than casually interested listeners. Here and there at the hundreds of Sunday club meetings, lecturers could be found holding forth on the 1847 Communist Manifesto, explaining Marx's theory of surplus value, accusing the capitalist (as well as the landlord) of "robbery" of the working man, or urging workers to seek political as well as industrial power through a party of their own.

Thus were a few radical workingmen, at least, being introduced to the various forms of Continental "social democracy" imported by the exiles, whose numbers had recently been swelled by a new wave of perse-

cution at home. Lest a misleading picture be drawn, however, it must be emphasized that only a relative handful of Britons had so far shown real interest in the new European doctrines: veteran agitators like John Sketchley of Birmingham or the Murray brothers in London, who were leavening their long-standing Chartist ideals with the exiles' theories; renegade middle-class reformers like H. M. Hyndman or Belfort Bax, who had recently read Capital and were still in the process of digesting it; militant young workingmen like Jack Williams or Joseph Lane, intensely class-conscious rebels against every form of "privilege" who were imbibing socialist ideas through close personal contact with the exiles; and a number of others active in popular radical politics, some of whom will be discussed below.[1]

It must also be understood that such socialist sentiment as existed was still unfocused, still little differentiated from traditional radical anti-monopolism; it had not yet found any really definitive indigenous expression. For the most part, even the more militant radicals in speaking of a "social revolution" seemed to envision it in anti-monopolist rather than really socialist terms: they sought the emancipation of "the people" through the break-up of monopolies enjoyed by the "privileged classes" -- monopolies of political power, of the land, of financial and industrial capital -- but they did not necessarily make a distinct attack upon private enterprise and the competitive

---

[1] Although the focus here is on London, the same trend was visible in a few other centres, including Scotland, where Robert Banner of Edinburgh, converted to socialism by the Austrian exile Andreas Scheu, in April 1881 organized a tiny "Scottish Labour Party" with a programme including "nationalisation of the means of Industrial production" (C. Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, Oxford 1961, p. 43). This seems to have been an abortive predecessor of the Edinburgh branch of the Democratic Federation, formed in 1883 under Banner's leadership.

system of production. This essential socialist attack upon competition itself, the insistence upon fully co-operative production and common or public ownership of the "means of life" (whatever the exact form of economic organization envisioned) was usually lacking, although many radicals favoured state ownership (but not management) of the land and advocated voluntary co-operative communities as an alternative way of life within the existing system which might gradually displace it by force of example.

What is most important in regard to the transition from radicalism to socialism, however, is that there was a great deal of common ground between the militant, class-conscious radical anti-monopolism of the beginning of the eighties and the several varities of socialism that were now being explored. This seems to explain the lack of clear distinctions between socialist and non-socialist viewpoints that characterized the radical Left at this time. With the purely political goals of the general working-class movement far from being achieved and occupying centre stage, it had long been easy enough for radicals inclined toward socialist principles and those inclined toward individualism to work together for the more immediate ends desired by both. Although radical political goals such as manhood or universal suffrage were often seen as means to greater social ends, these ends were so distant and vaguely defined that most militant anti-monopolists, whether individualist or socialist in tendency, could consider themselves allies in the same broad movement. But by the 1880s, when many of the old radical political goals had been achieved and others seemed likely to be won soon, it was natural that radicals would begin to pay closer attention to the possibilities for sweeping social and economic reforms. Not surprisingly, as these

possibilities came under closer scrutiny, radicals who gravitated toward socialist views would fall out with those who did not, and ultimately group together in a consciously new movement, built upon the older radicalism but seen to be distinct from it.

This seems to be the general pattern to the early development of the Social-Democratic Federation (Democratic Federation up to August 1884, and referred to here by its original name since its earliest years are the main focus) — the first nationally significant organization of the modern British socialist movement. In its first few years the Federation attracted to itself most of the radicals, proletarian and middle-class, who were moving toward socialism at the beginning of the eighties. Between 1881 and 1885, and largely within the Federation,[1] initially vague socialist ideas took more definite shape and emerged as a new British creed of social revolution, separate from the radicalism out of which it sprang and increasingly at odds with it, yet embodying and revitalizing its most basic traditional ideals.

A close examination of the Federation's early development and its relationship to metropolitan popular radicalism should help to illuminate both the process by which socialism emerged from radicalism and the con-

---

[1] Some of the middle-class group that started the Fabian Society in 1884, and their earlier recruits, were members of both the Society and the Federation for a time. Some of these, like H. H. Champion and J. L. Joynes, soon became exclusively Federation members. Others, including Frederick Keddell, Hubert Bland and Annie Besant became exclusively Fabians after varying intervals: for such dual memberships, and the Fabian Society's beginnings, see W. H. G. Armytage, Heavens Below (1961), pp. 327-332, and Paul Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour (1967), p. 137. On the more proletarian level there were some socialist tendencies developing more or less independently of the Federation at first (discussed below), but on the whole few socialists of any class were not at least briefly associated with the Federation before 1885.

tribution to the new movement made by the older tradition of the radical metropolitan artisan. The establishment of socialism as the creed of the Democratic Federation thus is the central concern of this and the following chapters. More exactly, the focus here is upon the first stage of a two-stage process, a process of differentiation and separation which sorted out the confused mixture of sometimes incompatible ideologies co-existing on the London radical Left at the beginning of the eighties. This first stage, lasting until about 1885, saw the development of a distinct socialist minority within the Federation, and the consequent rapid attrition of many of the original radical members who were not to be "converted" by the growing nucleus of socialists. The Federation thus became a much smaller body, consisting entirely of socialists — although their ideological positions within the ambit of socialism were still not fully formed. Further conflict and attrition was virtually inevitable, because their ideas of what socialism was and how it could be achieved still varied so widely.

With the hardening of incompatible positions — particularly over the issue of "parliamentary" vs. "anti-parliamentary" methods — the second stage of socialist development began. It may be conveniently dated from the schism that resulted in the formation of the Socialist League at the beginning of 1885. This stage — marked by both the continued fragmentation of the new movement and its closer involvement with trade-unionism and the main stream of working-class politics as socialist ideas gained a greater popular following in the late eighties and early nineties — has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention because of its direct relationship to the founding of the Labour Party. But much less attention has been paid to the pre-1885 stage, that of the original

emergence of a distinct socialist movement. Most accounts have passed over this stage rather quickly, usually concentrating mostly on leading figures like Hyndman and Morris. There has been a tendency, in particular, to treat Hyndman and the Federation as virtually identical.[1] Given the predominance of material from Hyndman's fluent pen among the relevant sources, this is admittedly difficult to avoid. But if we are to have an undistorted view of the organization as distinct from its leader, we must remember that Hyndman was not the Federation -- that as Professor Hobsbawm has observed, his individual quirks were not always those of the organization and did not necessarily affect its "fundamental orientation."[2] An attempt is made here to look beyond Hyndman as much as possible in order to see more clearly the lesser-known grass-roots leaders who also shaped the organization and the new socialism.

The contribution of these more obscure figures to the beginnings of the Federation has been briefly touched upon in a 1959 article by M. S. Wilkins, "The Non-Socialist Origins of England's First Important Socialist Organization."[3] This short article, the best account of the Federation's actual foundation, indicates some of the differences of viewpoint between Hyndman and the other founders of the "new party" and accurately reconstructs the three preliminary meetings on the 2d, 5th

---

1 These observations also apply to the most recent general study of socialism in Britain, Stanley Pierson's Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism (Ithaca, N. Y., and London, 1973). This is the most comprehensive description of the movement's long-range intellectual background and ideological development to appear in many years, but while it deals effectively with the popular "ethical socialism" of the nineties, it has little on the popular level of the movement in the years of its origins.

2 E. J. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men (1964), pp. 234-5.

3 International Review of Social History, Vol. IV, pp. 199-207.

and 19th of March, 1881 and the "Conference of Democratic Delegates" which officially launched the organization on June 8th of that year.[1] But it is too brief and limited in scope to do more than hint at the complex interplay of radical ideas and issues that affected the Federation in its first years or the wide range of causes and organizations embraced by its early membership. Even the best summaries to date of the Federation's development over the whole 1881-1885 period (still those in Pelling, Origins of the Labour Party and Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism[2]) do not go into much detail on these matters. These and other similar accounts have tended to pass rapidly over the Federation's early propaganda and its relationship to the radical Left[3] to focus instead upon the internal conflict over personalities and strategy that produced the schism at the end of 1884.

---

1 The article is based on contemporary press accounts and reminiscences and letters of some of the participants. The June 8 conference was quite widely reported: see the Echo, the Daily News, the Daily Telegraph, the Times and the St. James's Gazette for 9 June; the Radical, 11 June; Reynolds's Newspaper and the Weekly Dispatch, 12 June. The preliminary meetings, less widely publicized, were reported in the Daily News, 7 and 21 March; the Echo, 3 and 7 March; the Radical, 5 and 12 March; and the Observer, March 6.

2 The most relevant sections of the two books are pp. 13-27 and 36-56, respectively.

3 There are, however, some valuable insights into socialist-radical relationships in E. Eldon Barry, Nationalisation in British Politics (1965). See especially pp. 62-64 on the incorporation of radical demands for land nationalisation and "home colonisation" into the Federation's propaganda, and pp. 136-7 for the influence of the traditional radical faith in full democracy and parliamentary rule on the Federation's ultimate choice of a form of socialism that was both centralist and democratic. And the chapter "The First Two Hundred" in E. P. Thompson, William Morris (1955) picturesquely evokes the milieu of the exiles and the popular radical Left at the time of the Federation's foundation, though it has little on the Federation itself.

That incident and its causes and consequences hence require no special attention here, and of course the broad outlines of the Federation's early development are also well established. Without unnecessarily rehashing the better-known facts, it is intended here to build upon the basis laid by the Wilkins article and try to fill in some of the gaps in the story of the Federation's earliest years — the crucial years in the emergence (as distinct from the later development) of modern British socialism.

Anti-Liberalism and the Demand for a New Radical Party

An independent study of the accounts of the Democratic Federation's formation drawn upon in the Wilkins article as well as the general content of the Radical discussed in the previous chapter reveals no evidence that the participants were brought together by a common social theory. The main basis of the 1881 "New Party" movement which resulted in the founding of the Federation was a minority radical revolt against the Liberal Party, centering, for most of those concerned, around a number of specific grievances which had been accentuated by recent events. Various sections of working-class and middle-class radicals, who otherwise had little in common beyond the main-stream radical demands for political and constitutional reforms needed to put British government on a fully democratic basis,[1] found themselves united for the moment on three major points:

---

[1] The wide variety of class background, social and political orientation and favoured radical causes among them is readily apparent even from the partial list of those who took part in the Federation's initial meetings given in Hyndman's Record of an Adventurous Life, p. 246.

1) Strong sympathy for the Irish, both in their battle against landlordism and their drive for political freedom;

2) Dismay at Gladstone and the Liberal Government for resorting to coercion in Ireland and for other moves, such as the Freiheit prosecution, which were seen as an attack on democratic rights;

3) Opposition to Chamberlain's National Liberal Federation and the local Liberal "caucuses," which were seen as "wirepuller"-controlled barriers against working-class representation.

These were the principle issues behind the current wave of radical disillusionment with Liberalism; more than anything else the Democratic Federation at its foundation seems to have represented the result of "an effort in London to get together into something like organized shape both those who were bitterly disappointed with the outcome of the Gladstonian victory and those who had distrusted the Right Honorable gentleman all through the piece."[1] As this later observation on the Federation's foundation by its long-time secretary Harry Lee suggests, there was a hard core of more extreme radicals among the founders who had distrusted Gladstone and rejected Liberalism and all it represented for years; these were of course motivated by much more than the immediate political issues. But more than any other single factor, the essentially limited and ephemeral revolt against "Liberal Coercion" in Ireland provided just the impetus they needed to create an ambitious new organization of independent radicals — one which, though it was soon an obvious failure as a new radical "party," did succeed in bringing together many

---

1 H. W. Lee and E. Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, (1935), p. 44.

of the most extreme London radicals under one organizational roof, at least temporarily. And if it was largely the temporary furor over Irish Coercion that brought them together,[1] the programme they formulated showed that they had wider and more permanent concerns.[2]

The Federation's major objectives were to unify radicals independently of the Liberal Party on the basis of a minimum common programme for political reform, and -- in imitation of Chamberlain's NLF and conscious rivalry with it[3] -- to serve as a central co-ordinating body for efforts to increase the working-class share of power in the State. Both in these general objects and in most of the specific reforms called for in its programme, the Federation initially showed a closer relationship to the Chartist movement than to any form of socialism. Considering the persistent strength of the Chartist tradition in metropolitan radical circles and the presence of a number of old Chartists in the Federation's original membership, this is not surprising. Indeed, the possibility of

---

1 Hyndman often said so, both at the time and later; see, e.g., Henry George's interview of him for the New York Irish World, reprinted in the Radical, 1 April 1882. The coercion issue is also identified as the main immediate impetus toward the founding of the Federation in the report of the Executive to the 1884 annual conference (Justice, 9 August 1884).

2 The nine points of the programme, as printed in the Radical 9 July 1881 and subsequent issues, were (1) Adult Suffrage, (2) Triennial Parliaments, (3) Equal Electoral Districts, (4) Payment of Members and Official Expenses out of the Rates, (5) Bribery, Treating and Corrupt Practices to be made Acts of Felony, (6) Abolition of the House of Lords as a Legislative Body, (7) Legislative Independence for Ireland, (8) National and Federal Parliaments (this being the key point in Hyndman's scheme for decentralization and local self-government throughout the Empire), and (9) Nationalisation of the Land. The chief object of the Federation was "To unite the various organisations of Democrats and workers throughout Great Britain and Ireland for the purpose of securing equal rights for all, and forming a centre of organisation in times of political excitement."

3 Hyndman interview, Radical, 1 April 1882.

a revival of Chartism seems to have been uppermost in Hyndman's mind in the months before its foundation. In his recollections of his meetings with Marx during the winter of 1880-81 as "a student in the presence of a master,"[1] Hyndman mentions that he had been making a close study of the Chartist movement and had "frequently" discussed it with Marx. Hyndman said Marx was "entirely sympathetic with my idea of reviving the Chartist organisation,"[2] although seeing little chance of success.

There was nothing, then, in the Democratic Federation's initial programme that clearly foreshadowed its transformation into a socialist body except land nationalisation. And this in itself did not necessarily imply any definite socialist tendency, only an attack on the most visible and traditionally despised form of monopoly. As such it could be equally compatible with either a socialist or individualist viewpoint. In any case, it seems to have been approved by the delegates to the founding conference with only vague and desultory discussion, and was of minor importance at first except to a few of the members. One observer at the conference thought many of the delegates did not really understand what was meant by land nationalization,[3] and another — a strong advocate — complained that even those who spoke in its favour seemed not to recognize its potential for undermining "the foundation on which all privilege rests."[4]

---

1 Hyndman, Record, p. 270. For Hyndman's full account of their discussions and his impressions of Marx, see pp. 268-289.

2 Ibid., p. 273.

3 "The New Party" (unsigned leader by J. Morrison Davidson), Weekly Dispatch, 12 June 1881.

4 William Webster, "Shall We Have a Land Party?" Radical, 11 June 1881.

Expectations for the "New Party": Hyndman and the Ultra-Radicals

There is no indication that any of the "new party" radicals involved in the foundation of the Democratic Federation publicly proposed any definitively socialist aim for the body. Nor does it appear that anyone made any direct mention of "socialism" or any statement of an explicitly socialist viewpoint at either the preliminary meetings or the formal inaugural conference. Nevertheless, there is evidence that some of the promoters and foundation members were familiar with socialist ideas and had to a large extent adopted them. A number of the founders, even if they did not say so at the initial public meetings, evidently hoped from the outset that the projected "new party" would adopt a more revolutionary and socialistic — if not avowedly socialist — position than it in fact originally took. Despite misgivings about the body, and particularly about Hyndman, which kept some of these from joining initially, others did join in the hope of leading it in the direction of revolutionary socialism.

In examining these propositions the question of Hyndman's original intention inevitably comes first to mind. As already noted, he apparently first viewed the embryonic Federation as a means of promoting a Chartist revival. He believed in retrospect that he and "perhaps one or two others" intended from the outset to turn the Federation into "a Socialist party in Great Britain," and did not do so immediately only because it would have been "quite useless" in view of the prevailing public hostility toward socialism and ignorance of it, even among radicals.[1] But these attitudes did not discourage Hyndman a couple of

---

[1] Hyndman, Record, pp. 224-5; p. 247.

years later, when they were still very much present. It seems more likely that he initially refrained from directly advocating socialism because he himself was by no means fully committed to it as yet. As Wilkins has pointed out, the evidence of Hyndman's writings and actions at the time of the Federation's formation strongly suggests that this was the case. He was still in no sense a revolutionist, and he was for the moment largely satisfied with the radical programme initially adopted by the Federation.[1] He had begun to advocate collectivist ideas in his writing, but only cautiously and rather vaguely. The well-known section of England for All in which he attempted to summarize Marx's Capital seems curiously incompatible with an otherwise Tory-Democrat text. Hyndman evidently still confused socialism with violent anarchism, and still harboured strong fears of a proletarian revolutionary uprising.[2] Harry Lee, recalling this period for his history of the Federation, considered it "fairly certain" that Hyndman was originally motivated to assume the leadership of the new organization "by his disgust at Gladstone and the Liberals, by genuine sympathy with real democratic movements as against party politics, and by his own impulsiveness of action ... and not by any fixed idea of future definite Socialist

---

1 "Non-Socialist Origins," pp. 204-7. In pointing out a number of differences between the original June, 1881 edition of England for All and later versions, Wilkins notes that in some respects -- particularly the unequivocal demands for land nationalization and "legislative independence" for Ireland -- the Federation programme actually went beyond Hyndman's proposals up to this time.

2 The first edition of England for All contained a warning against "the demon of Socialism" (p. 86, quoted ibid., p. 207); and the danger of such an uprising taking place unless the comfortable classes took the lead in promoting judicious reforms was the main theme of Hyndman's article "Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch" in the Nineteenth Century for January, 1881.

propaganda and organisation."[1]

If Hyndman later became a revolutionary socialist with discordant Tory leanings — he would always be dogged by suspicion and distrust because of his eccentric ideological mixture[2] — he was in 1881 more of a Tory with discordant socialist leanings: he now believed that the decline of capitalism and class privilege was inevitable, but he still seemed to consider this a change to be accepted and carefully controlled rather than one to be eagerly embraced. For this early period, Max Beer's description of Hyndman as "a sort of an English Tiberius Gracchus" seems to ring true. As Beer saw it, Hyndman had sought out Marx in the winter of 1880-81

> As a young Roman patrician, aspiring to the tribunate, might have come to a poor expatriated Greek scholar...to learn something from him about Hellenic communist movements, and to use this knowledge for the purpose of keeping the proletariat within the fold of Roman politics, and to teach his countrymen how to avoid the revolutionary pitfalls which had proved so destructive to Hellas.[3]

Although many on the far Left continued to take this view of Hyndman, his position actually changed rapidly after the Federation was founded. He seems to have become fully committed to Marxism and the idea of a socialist revolution — though something of his fear of an uncontrolled proletarian uprising always persisted — by 1883, and has

---

1 Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, p. 44.

2 Tinges of chauvinism and imperialism were always present in Hyndman's thinking, but it should be remembered that he fought for an Empire with Home Rule, with full democratic representation, and without economic exploitation. Viewed in the context of his own time, Hyndman's imperialist tendencies seem relatively mild.

3 M. Beer, A History of British Socialism, Vol. II (1920), pp. 228-30.

usually been given full credit for the Federation's initial movement in this direction.[1]

But was Hyndman alone responsible for the organization's first steps toward socialism? Contemporary reportage on the Federation in the years before Justice was started (January 1884) is distinctly limited, and few records of the meetings and conferences of these early years have survived. Yet the available evidence about the backgrounds, views, activities and associates of early Democratic Federation members and about the nature of the milieu in which they moved is enough to suggest strongly that this was not the case -- that the Federation's acceptance of socialism was by no means entirely the work of Hyndman, nor even of the phalanx of newly-converted middle-class socialists -- Morris, Champion, Bax, J. L. Joynes, R. P. B. Frost and others -- who began joining from about the start of 1883. Their role is not to be minimized, as will be seen, but the important groundwork laid by others has been much less widely acknowledged both by contemporaries and historians.

Many of the most class-conscious, revolutionary-minded radical workingmen in London, holding views well to the left of Hyndman's during the Federation's first year or so, played a prominent part in its founding and early development. This left wing of the 1881 "new party" movement included several distinguishable groups: there were the few socialist exiles who had become active in native radical circles; the "old guard" survivors of the Chartist generation whose militance had never subsided; a younger group of ultra-radicals who had become active since the beginning of the seventies, in the Land and Labour League or the

---

[1] Barry, Nationalisation, p. 137; Wilkins, "Non-Socialist Origins," p. 207.

Republican Club movement or the Magna Charta Association or in certain very 'advanced' radical clubs in East London, Soho, Marylebone and Southwark;[1] and a few journalists like those connected with the Radical who were convinced that land nationalization and labour representation were the keys to a social revolution.

Typical of the members of these groups were men like James and Charles Murray, William Townshend, Bill Morgan, and other Chartist veterans of the Soho O'Brienite circle; Patrick Hennessey, president of the old Land and Labour League; Francis W. Soutter of the Radical; Andreas Scheu, the Viennese socialist exile, and Adam Weiler, the German Marxist cabinetmaker, who were both influential propagandists among English radicals and trade unionists. And, representing the newer generation of agitators, there were militants like Jack Williams, Joseph Lane, Edwin Dunn and others in the "English Section" of the Rose Street refugees' club who were spreading a melange of socialist, anarchist and traditional radical ideas from Soho and Marylebone to the slums of the East End. There were also a few new recruits like James Macdonald, young tailor just arrived from Edinburgh, who in 1881 joined with Weiler and other foreign Marxists and native ultra-radicals to form a new left-wing Marylebone society which came into the Federation as soon as the latter's socialist tendency became manifest.

These and others like them in the avant-garde of British popular radicalism spearheaded the "new party" revolt against Liberalism. Most of them took part in the organizing meetings of the Federation, and many were members from the outset. All of those named — except, apparently,

---

[1] These clubs are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

for Dunn -- joined it eventually, and in the meantime were in close contact with its members and its activities. One gathers from the connections in which their names appear in the radical press and reminiscence literature that these people were in effect a kind of ginger group in the metropolitan radical milieu, mostly known to each other, holding multiple memberships in the most advanced organizations going and taking part in every promising agitation thrown up by events. They were, as E. P. Thompson has characterized them,

> a small but active group, in contact with the working-class Radical Clubs of East London, which advocated universal or manhood suffrage and the fullest democratic rights: republicanism: the nationalisation of the land: solidarity with democratic movements abroad: and which had hazy ideas of socialist theory, drawn both from Owenite and from European sources.[1]

It is difficult to be precise about the views of most individuals in this circle. Unlike the better-known socialist leaders who expressed their theories in many books and articles, they relied mostly upon the spoken rather than the written word, propagating their ideas in the Sunday evening club debate or at the open-air speakers' pitch, the usual forums of the radical workingman. When they wrote it was mostly in the ephemeral form of pamphlets, handbills, leaflets and manifestoes, relatively few of which have survived. Brief newspaper notices of club lectures and debates and occasional fuller reports of what they said on certain occasions, plus the reminiscences left by a few of them and by the more famous figures who knew them, provide the bulk of the information we have about them. Judging from this kind of evidence of the views they

---

1 William Morris, pp. 327-8.

held, the agitations they engaged in and the nature of the local organizations they founded or came to dominate, it seems doubtful if most of these ultra-radicals could be accurately described as "socialists" in any strict sense of the term as early as 1881 or 82. Yet even if their views at this time reflected traditional radical anti-monopolism as much as socialist thinking, they certainly were "social democrats" in the broad sense in which they used the term to distinguish themselves from their less advanced brethren who were merely political democrats. And they were social revolutionists as well, in the sense that they were convinced of the reality of class conflict and economic as well as political oppression, were committed to a real and not just a legal equality, and rejected the individualist remedies of the self-help philosophy as inadequate and misleading.

The activities of these grass-roots ultra-radical leaders in the early eighties seem to provide the bridge of continuity between the older radicalism and the new socialism that has been missing in accounts which have presented the new movement as something which suddenly appeared full-blown in 1883 or 84 with the conversion of some of the better-known middle-class socialists. A closer look at the ultra-radicals' part in the founding of the Democratic Federation in 1881 and at the attitudes they held at this time should help to indicate the extent of their contribution.

The Federation in its Formative Stage, March - June 1881

A careful reading of newspaper accounts of the "new party" initiatives in the spring of 1881 reveals that a more militant, class-conflict oriented viewpoint prevailed at the preliminary meetings in

March than at the official launching of the Democratic Federation in June. Particularly in the earliest discussions, held on the 2d and 5th of March, the ultra-radicals seem to have dominated the proceedings. The emphasis at these meetings was on the proposed organization's potential as a "working-class party" whose "grand object" was to be "the direct representation of labour." The promoters seemed prepared to go beyond the usual radical demands for political and constitutional reforms in dealing with "the question of improvement in the social position of the people." They condemned the Liberal "caucus" system for "making it impossible for a labour candidate to run for a seat with any chance of success" and unanimously passed a resolution pledging themselves "to endeavour to establish a labour party." What they had in mind was not quite the same as the later concept of a labour party, but they intended it not only to promote working-class representation but to "agitate for the settlement of pressing social and political questions" and co-ordinate a campaign of "popular education" on these questions. They also attacked the coercion policy in Ireland, but gave notably more attention than the delegates at the June conference to these more sweeping radical aims as compared with specifically Irish matters.[1]

---

[1] "The New Party," Radical, 12 March 1881; "Proposed Radical Organisation," Echo, 3 March 1881; "A New Political Movement," Daily News, 7 March 1881. Ideas of labour representation up to this time rarely included the concept of a party based primarily on the trade unions. The 1881 "new party" promoters looked instead to the network of workingmen's radical clubs as the main basis of the party. Although many of them were active in small craft unions of compositors, tailors, shoemakers, cabinetmakers and the like, this is not surprising in view of the frequent radical attacks on the TUC and the unions for selfish exclusiveness and political timidity.

The broader themes of the early meetings, which went beyond the immediate issues provoking radical unrest, were sounded by Edwin Dunn in a letter published in the Radical shortly after the second meeting. In justifying the "new party" idea, Dunn spoke of the "continual poverty and anxiety of the labouring masses" as an inevitable state of affairs so long as "every class is united, and is duly represented in Parliament, save that of the majority of the nation." Only in working-class unity could "labour's remedy" be found — that is, in the uniting of "all societies composed of workingmen into a party" which would be powerful enough to make working-class representation practicable.[1]

Dunn, a young member of the "English Section" of the Rose Street Club whose lectures on the metropolitan radical club circuit and connections with foreign revolutionists mark him as having been at this time a socialist moving towards anarchism, was a leading participant in the two earliest "new party" meetings, clearly the spokesman for the more advanced men present. This much is evident from contemporary newspaper reports alone[2]; and Frank Kitz, another "English Section" member, later said it was Dunn and not Hyndman who originally took the initiative in convening these meetings.[3] Dunn was also on the committee which met on

---

1 Radical, 12 March 1881.

2 See especially the Radical, 5 and 12 March 1881; the Echo, 3 and 7 March 1881; and the Daily News, 7 March 1881.

3 Kitz, "Recollections and Reflections," Freedom, April 1912. Kitz was always hostile toward Hyndman, but this reference does not look like an attempt to exaggerate Dunn's role in order to minimize Hyndman's (which even the newspaper accounts suggest was not a major one initially). Kitz was also critical of Dunn, describing him here as an "ambitious" young man impatient with the "obscure and ill-requited efforts" of the "English Section" propagandists and eager for the "limelight" of leadership of a mass movement — for which, Kitz implied, he was too willing to compromise with "all sorts and conditions of men", including "Tories of the neo-Tory school" like Hyndman.

March 12 to draw up a provisional programme for the new organization — as were several others of decidedly revolutionary views, including John Lord, president of the "English Section," and C. J. Garcia, a prominent member of a purely Marxist group which had recently seceded from the Rose Street club.[1]

There is no report of what went on at the committee meeting, so we do not know what Dunn might have said there -- although the indications are that he and fellow militants came into conflict with Hyndman and the more moderate faction. Very likely Dunn may have spoken as he did on other occasions shortly afterward, when he expressed far more extreme views than were implied by his remarks at the March 2d and March 5th meetings and in the letter just quoted from.

In the summer of 1881, Dunn was lecturing frequently at radical club meetings on the topic "Who are the Revolutionists, and What are their Aims?" On one occasion when he gave this lecture -- a meeting of the Manhood Suffrage League on 21 August 1881 -- a detailed summary of his talk was printed.[2] According to this report, which may be taken as representing many other such lectures by ultra-radicals and exiles that went unrecorded except for brief notices in the club columns of radical

---

1 Radical, 12 and 19 March 1881. The more moderate and middle-class element on the committee included Professor Beesly, the well-known Positivist; Hyndman, who up to this point had remained relatively in the background; and H. A. M. Butler-Johnstone, M. P. for Canterbury, whose Tory-Democrat views were similar to Hyndman's at this time. Joseph Cowen, the noted ultra-radical Newcastle M. P. who was being urged to assume the leadership of the new movement, was also on the committee.

2 Labour Standard, 27 August 1881, reprinted in Stan Shipley, Club Life and Socialism in Mid-Victorian London (History Workshop series No. 5, Oxford 1971), pp. 75-6.

papers, Dunn's "revolutionists" had clearly socialist aims.

Dunn asserted that "the bulk of the producers in all countries were worse fed than the horses of the wealthy classes" and urged that "it should not be so, the producers ... should be the masters of society." The "idle or non-producing classes" had no right to usurp, as they had done, both "political power, and the results of the productive industry of the people." The "revolutionary party" (by which Dunn presumably meant, so far as Britain was concerned, mainly his own group of ultra-radicals which had established close ties with the exiles) thus sought to establish both "political and social justice"; that is, they "wanted something more than manhood suffrage," which would still leave the people "in the hands of landlords and the money capitalists, struggling for the privilege to live by wages-slavery." They also wanted "something more than mere land reform," which as usually advocated would only "transfer the land of the country from the aristocracy to the money class — to the men that had bought labour cheap and sold it dear." The aims of the revolutionists, then, included not only the complete "abolition of landlordism" with its "power of social oppression" through land nationalization, but also the "nationalisation of ... the instruments of production and machinery and equal social advantages for all."[1]

Dunn also listed several more specific social and political demands, mostly similar to those in the Democratic Federation programme. But he emphasized that the larger goals he had outlined required a "change in the social system" which could ultimately be brought about only by "moral force":

---

[1] Ibid.

> No revolution or change would take place until the people were politically educated. The people must form a distinct party by themselves, if they were ever to be emancipated, and they must have a knowledge of their political and social rights.[1]

The leading members of the Mahhood Suffrage League, as pointed out elsewhere in this thesis, had been struggling to spread this kind of knowledge among their fellow workingmen — in language very similar to that used by Dunn — since the decline of Chartism. So it is not surprising, in view of the advanced nature of his audience on this occasion, that Dunn concluded his talk "amidst loud and continued cheering."[2] It may be noted in passing that at least three of the men named in the report as participants in the "very animated discussion" that followed -- William Morgan, W. J. Sadler and A. J. Dadson (here misspelled "Dodson") — were active members of the newly-founded Democratic Federation, as were the Murray brothers and other MSL members.

Dunn evidently did not elaborate on his demand for nationalization of "the instruments of production and machinery." He seemed to place more emphasis on nationalization of the land, and on a close reading some of the phraseology (assuming this report is an accurate paraphrase of Dunn's actual words) smacks more of radical anti-monopolism than socialism. But the socialist ideas would seem to be undeniably there, even if vaguely expressed, as well as the idea of an independent labour party which he had also discussed at the preliminary Federation meetings.

---

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

On another occasion, some weeks earlier, Dunn seems to have taken a still more militant line, revealing anarchist tendencies which suggest that he must have been wavering at this time between centralized state socialism achieved through a "labour party" and Kropotkin-type anarchist-communism.

The occasion in question — at which Kropotkin, incidentally, was present — was an international "Socialist and Revolutionary Congress" attended by delegates from Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Austria and the USA as well as Britain, who held secret meetings in London through the week of 13-20 July, 1881. At the single public meeting, on the 18th, Edwin Dunn presided (an indication of his prominence on the London ultra-radical Left at this time) and in his address to the assembly "denounced capital and government in every form, and urged union among all nationalities for the destruction of these enemies of democracy." The foreign delegates, who had just been hounded out of Zurich and were further incensed by the news of Johann Most's 16-month prison sentence for his article in the London Freiheit applauding the assassination of Czar Alexander, expressed their outrage against the existing system in violent resolutions along the lines indicated by Dunn. Another English delegate, Dunn's comrade Frank Kitz, expressed the general tone of the gathering in saying that he "hoped that before sixteen months the aristocrats of this country would have to beg the mercy of the working man."[1]

Such incendiary outbursts would not have favourably impressed either the middle-class reformers present at the formative meetings of

---

[1] Pall Mall Gazette, 19 July 1881. The meeting was also reported in the Daily Telegraph (same date).

the Democratic Federation or the representatives of the more moderate workingmen's radical clubs, as Dunn and the others of the ultra-radicals' and exiles' circle were no doubt well aware. Even the direct advocacy of socialism would have been risky at this period when to most people it signified violent nihilism and nothing more. Evidently they watched their language carefully at these meetings in order to emphasize their common ground with the more moderate elements of the movement and avoid frightening away at the outset the masses of workingmen they hoped to attract.

Nevertheless the facts that the first "new party" meeting was held at the hall of the Rose Street Club; that a man of Dunn's views was one of the primary instigators of the movement; that Dunn and others of the ultra-radical and socialist Left made up about half of the committee chosen to draw up the Democratic Federation's provisional programme; and that the Federation in its embryonic stage showed a more broadly militant, working-class and "labour-party" orientation than at its formal inception and for some time afterward -- all these points would seem to suggest that the impulses which led to the foundation of the initially non-socialist Federation were not so far removed from socialism as may appear when the role of some of the lesser-known participants is not taken into account. For some of the most revolutionary-minded agitators in London, holding views that were either socialist or strongly influenced by socialist ideas, seem to have taken a keen interest in the projected "new party" and had more to do with setting it on foot than has been generally recognized.

Sometime after the initial March meetings of the "new party" promoters, the ultra-radical element evidently lost much of their early

influence within the movement, and for the time being, at least, some of them warily stood aside from it. A notable shift of emphasis was apparent by the time of the June 8 foundation conference. Edwin Dunn and others who had been active in the early discussions were not heard from; Ireland now seemed to be the predominant concern of the delegates; little if anything was said about the aim of creating a "labour party"; and the general tone of the proceedings, despite the strong pro-Irish and anti-Liberal sentiment, reflected a rather more conventional radicalism.

This was all too evident to the more "advanced" radicals at the conference when Hyndman, with the acquiescence of most of the delegates, quashed a move to add an explicit republican plank to the platform. J. Morrison Davidson, the prominent radical journalist, who attended the conference with Andreas Scheu, had already begun to find the proceedings tiresome and the programme tame: "The old ground so often trodden was once more wearily traversed," with much "vain" and "fallacious" discussion being wasted on points Davidson believed were "familiar to all advanced political thinkers."[1] But it was Hyndman's attitude, more than anything else, that offended Davidson and Scheu. When Hyndman ruled from the chair (in rather peremptory and offended tones, even by his own account)[2] that any discussion of the monarchy was out of order, they walked out of the conference in dismay -- Davidson proceeding to the Weekly Dispatch office to pen the leader from which the remarks above were

---

1 Davidson, "The New Party," Weekly Dispatch, 12 June 1881. Davidson identifies this unsigned leader as his own in Annals of Toil, pp. 43-6.

2 Hyndman, Record, p. 250.

quoted, in which he flatly dismissed Hyndman as "an ultra-jingo."[1]

As the foregoing suggests, much of the change in tone between the preliminary meetings and the official launching of the Federation may be traced to a change of leadership. Frank Kitz's statement that Dunn was the original leader has already been noted; Kitz also said that Hyndman "soon engaged in a conflict with Dunn for the leadership, and evicted him."[2] But it is doubtful if the conflict was entirely between Dunn and Hyndman. Although Dunn clearly was one of the chief promoters of the new movement, the contemporary newspaper accounts all point to Joseph Cowen, widely regarded by advanced radicals as England's "leading Democrat"[3] at this time, as the man originally expected by all concerned to assume the leadership.[4] Probably Dunn was the primary grass-roots leader at the outset and Cowen was more of a figurehead; but in any case some disagreement arose at the March 12th committee meeting mentioned earlier, after which both Cowen and Dunn effectively withdrew from the movement and left the field to Hyndman.

Evidently the association of Cowen's name with the "new party" movement had been an important drawing card for all the sections of radicalism associated with it. Both his principled independence as Radical MP for Newcastle (1873-1885) and his activities as a kind of middle-class

---

1 Weekly Dispatch, loc. cit., Annals of Toil, p. 435. After reading England for All and observing the development of the Federation, however, Davidson felt he had judged too hastily: Annals, pp. 436-8.

2 Freedom, April, 1912.

3 Davidson, Annals of Toil, p. 435.

4 Even Hyndman originally spoke of Cowen as the leader, although claiming he himself "took some part" in organizing the March 5th meeting at which Cowen presided: see Hyndman's letter in the Echo, 7 March 1881.

angel to working-class causes had made Cowen the logical choice to lead a new radical party. As model employer, friend of Chartists, trade unionists and republicans, and supporter of continental democratic movements, he had for decades condemned the views of Tories, Whigs and "Manchester School" economists as expressions of selfish materialism. By 1881 his opposition to both the Chamberlain "caucuses" and coercion in Ireland, which he attacked in his outspoken Newcastle Daily Chronicle, had made him a friend to the Irish party and anathema to Liberal politicians both in Parliament and in his own constituency. He shared Hyndman's Russophobia and thus, like him, had supported the "wrong" (i.e. Tory) side on the Eastern Question in the late 1870s, but this does not seem to have hurt his reputation among extreme radicals; in 1882 he still rated the Radical's highest praise, as "a man of absolute personal purity ... who gives freely of his great wealth to the cause of the dispossessed." Cowen seems to have shared the common radical distrust of strong personal leadership and disciplined organization as anti-democratic; very likely his unexplained withdrawal from the Federation had something to do with Hyndman's self-assertion in these directions.[1]

---

[1] "Joseph Cowen," Dictionary of Labour Biography, ed. J. M. Bellamy and J. Saville, Vol. I (1972); Radical, 24 June 1882; Wilkins, "Non-Socialist Origins," p. 202; Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, p. 39. Cowen was an increasingly suspect figure among Liberals from the time he spoke out in support of Disraeli's Eastern Question policy. This was not a popular position with advanced radicals either, but the latter — the anti-Liberal radicals— could forgive him for this because he seemed to be very much in their camp on most other issues. Particularly in the climate of 1881-2, Cowen's increasing estrangement from the Liberals because of his pro-Irish stance and his bitter conflicts with the Newcastle caucus (see DLB, Vol. I, p. 84) only made him more attractive to the ultra-radical Left, at least in London. Cowen had imperialist tendencies which became extreme in the years following his retirement from Parliament shortly after the 1885 election (when he kept his seat only because of support from Irish and Tory voters), but he apparently maintained friendly relations with Leftists, including Hyndman, through the early eighties (Ibid.).

Hyndman as the leader apparently did not inspire much confidence. When Cowen failed to appear on March 19th at the third and largest public meeting held by the promoters, and Hyndman dominated the proceedings, there was an immediately noticeable falling-off of radical enthusiasm. Only one contemporary report of this meeting is available,[1] and it indicates that the "working-class party" emphasis and militant class-consciousness of the earlier meetings had already given way to a more conventional and reformist approach. The provisional programme announced at the start of the meeting by Hyndman was substantially the same as that adopted by the June conference, except that land nationalisation was not included. It was now added on the urging of J. Finlay Finlayson of the Manchester-based Democratic League that "no advanced programme would be complete" without it, and "adult" was substituted for manhood suffrage, but only after "long and desultory argument." Professor Beesly said he had concluded after attending all three meetings that the time was not ripe for such a national organization as proposed until the workingmen's clubs "knew their own minds better," but his motion to that effect was defeated.[2]

The Echo, which had reported the first two meetings in considerable detail, ignored the March 19th meeting, and printed only a brief and desultory account of the June conference. The Radical, which had strongly encouraged all the "new party" initiatives up to March 19th, also failed to report the meeting of that date -- after explicitly

---

1 Daily News, 21 March 1881.

2 Ibid.

promising to do so[1] -- and had nothing further to say about the movement for two months. Finally, on May 21, it broke its silence to deliver an apparent criticism of Hyndman for attempting to lay down "a programme which would do for all futurity." It also expressed a strong distrust of tight organization and formal leadership.

The Radical's leader of June 11 on the Federation's formal launching at the "Conference of Democratic Delegates" indicates that by this time some of the lost radical support had been regained. The Radical was now reassured that the new organization could become "a useful piece of educational and electioneering machinery" since it had adopted a platform that was "wide enough for all to stand on" who were "entitled to call themselves radicals." Clearly the kind of "new party" the Radical sought -- despite its own position well to the left of the political spectrum -- was not one that would appeal only to "pure idealists" but one with a pragmatic approach which could accommodate the whole range of ideological positions among the radical rank-and-file. But if the Radical did not find the Federation's programme too moderate, it shared with those who did a nagging distrust of Hyndman's motives. This is revealed in several veiled references in this article -- most notably a warning to the new organization that it must put itself on a "thoroughly democratic basis" and become financially self-supporting so that no "dominant influence" could control it.

. . . . . .

---

[1] In the issue appearing the same day, 19 March 1881.

Both because of his domineering personality and the air of Toryism and middle-class respectability that clung to him, Hyndman lacked the credibility as leader of an advanced movement in the working-class interest that Joseph Cowen apparently enjoyed. Even Hyndman's most intensely loyal working-class followers over the years, Jack Williams and Harry Quelch, admitted that they were initially suspicious of him.[1] Other radical workingmen who felt this suspicion were much slower to be convinced of Hyndman's sincerity. A few were never convinced, like Frank Kitz, who believed Hyndman's "conversion was too sudden to be thorough" and always regarded him as a Tory in disguise.[2] Hyndman's unpopularity was not altogether a matter of class or ideology, for both he and Cowen were wealthy men of upper middle-class backgrounds, and their views -- particularly at the beginning of the eighties -- were actually very similar.[3] Personal style and reputation evidently counted heavily, and in these matters Cowen came across much more convincingly than Hyndman as a "sound democrat," a rebel against his own class and the complex of "respectable" views it stood for in the minds of working-class radicals.

---

1 See their respective comments in the SDF pamphlet How I Became a Socialist (reprints of the 1894-6 Justice series), p. 39 and p. 75. Not the least of the causes of this suspicion was Hyndman's unsuccessful candidacy for Parliament in Marylebone in 1880 (the first time radical workingmen had heard of him) which was the origin of his "jingo" reputation: see Lee and Archbold, Social Democracy in Britain, pp. 43-44; and Frank Kitz, "Recollections and Reflections," Freedom, February, 1912.

2 Freedom, April, 1912.

3 Compare the description of Cowen's views in the Dictionary of Labour Biography with Hyndman's well-known attitudes, especially in regard to foreign affairs and the Empire.

Some of the ultra-radical circle described earlier, whose views were comparable to Edwin Dunn's — men like Jack Williams of the Magna Charta Association and the Rose Street Club's "English Section," or Charles and James Murray and other O'Brienite ex-Chartists in the Manhood Suffrage League — remained active in the embryonic Democratic Federation after Hyndman's takeover of the leadership, and were among its foundation members. These formed from the outset a small nucleus within the Federation which stood well to the left of most of the original membership. According to Andreas Scheu (who soon became one of them), their presence helped to push the Federation in a socialist direction during 1881 and 82 perhaps rather faster than Hyndman wanted to go at this stage.[1] Others of the same circle, many of whom would later augment this left-wing nucleus within the Federation, stayed outside it for the time being. Because they distrusted Hyndman, or felt that the Federation's initial programme was not 'advanced' enough, or for both reasons, they would not commit themselves to the Federation until they felt it was moving closer to their own more nearly socialist position.

However, as suggested earlier, this latter group also seems to have made a significant contribution to the development of a socialist propaganda on the London radical scene through their activities in existing local societies as well as some new ones they organized. In doing

---

[1] Scheu, Umsturzkeime (Seeds of Revolution), cited in Thompson, William Morris, p. 344.

so they also helped to lay the groundwork for the Federation's turn toward socialism even when they were not formally affiliated with it; for in the early eighties, just as there was no clear distinction between socialist and radical propaganda, there were no walls between the various organizations of more or less "advanced" character within the general category of independent radicalism. On the contrary, there was a remarkable degree of inter-connection among them in the sense of overlapping memberships, co-operation in public agitations for common ends, and constant interchange of ideas through the radical-club lecture circuit and the institution of the Sunday evening club debate.[1]

The ultra-radical ginger groups both within and without the Federation, then, were by no means isolated either from each other or from the radical milieu as a whole. Some examples of their interconnections and a closer look at the main centres in which grass-roots radical agitation was taking on a socialist tinge at the time of the Federation's beginnings thus would seem to be in order before the development of the Federation proper is examined.

---

[1] Stan Shipley has aptly described the typical Sunday evening meeting, with its "opener" lecture on political, literary, historical or scientific subjects and following debate, as the "cornerstone of club live," and the club itself as the "artisan's university": Shipley, Club Life and Socialism, pp. 23 and 27. Shipley may have somewhat overestimated the extent of socialist ideas (as distinct from militant class-consciousness) in the workingmen's clubs of the seventies and early eighties, but has made a valuable contribution to our understanding of their place in the world of the London artisan during the period dealt with here.

CHAPTER VI

THE MILIEU OF THE FEDERATION: LONDON ULTRA-RADICALISM AND THE BEGINNINGS OF A SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA, 1880-1883

Anyone who examines the lecture notices and reports of club debates, public meetings and the like in London papers such as the Radical, the National Reformer, the Weekly Dispatch, Reynolds's Newspaper or the Labour Standard in the early 1880s will note the frequency with which certain names keep popping up in connection with radical activities all over the metropolis. Many of these ubiquitous agitators were members of the Democratic Federation, soon to become members, or close associates of members. A few typical items from the Radical concerning activities not directly involving the Federation itself (and leaving aside the lecturing activity, some of it on the theme of socialism, of such members as the Murrays, Helen Taylor, Jack Williams, Herbert Burrows and Andreas Scheu which was discussed in Chapter IV) will illustrate the wide connections of Federation members with other radical groups and show the cross currents of influence at work.[1]

Early in December, 1880, we find the Murray brothers and Frank Kitz mentioned as leading participants in a discussion of Shelley's views on the Irish at a meeting of the Rose Street Club.[2] Kitz and the Murrays

---

1 Where nothing has been said so far about the connection of a person named with the Federation, this is indicated in parentheses.

2 Radical, 4 December 1880.

again figure prominently in the report of a special meeting held by the club in March 1881 to commemorate the 1848 revolutions and the Paris Commune of 1871, where they were among a number of speakers who applauded the recent assasination of the Russian Czar in English, French and German.[1] F. W. Soutter, one of the Radical's editors (who encouraged the foundation of the Federation, had some misgivings about it, but joined it at the outset and apparently became a socialist by 1884 if not earlier), often appears in the paper's news items in his capacity as a leader of the Anti-Coercion movement. One such item shows him taking a prominent part in a February 1881 rally held by the Magna Charta Association to protest the Government's Irish Coercion bills.[2] At the beginning of April, 1881, Soutter and Dr. G. B. Clark (a former IWMA member, later MP for Caithness and a lifelong land nationalizer, who was one of the most prominent Federation members up to 1883) were scheduled to act as "conveners of the meeting" at an April 5 demonstration being organized by the Rose Street Club's "English Section" to protest the prosecution of

---

1 Ibid., 26 March 1881. Kitz (here misspelled Ketts) might have spoken either in English or German, for as a child of 1848 German refugees who was raised in London poverty he was bilingual and uniquely at home in the worlds of both English radical workingmen and Continental exiles.

2 Ibid., 19 February 1881.

Johann Most and the Freiheit.[1]

Moving ahead to May, 1882, we find Jack Williams and Tom S. Lemon (Federation members from the beginning), Joseph Lane (founder of the socialist Labour Emancipation League, which worked closely with the Federation in East London, formally affiliating with it in 1884) and, again, Frank Kitz as the main speakers at a major East London demonstration they had all helped to organize. This meeting — which will be discussed in more detail later since it foreshadowed a major Democratic Federation agitation in the following year — was held under joint auspices of the Magna Charta Association, the Stratford Dialectical and Radical Club, the Homerton Social Democratic Club and the "English Section" of the Rose Street Club to protest an emigration scheme being promoted as the cure for London poverty by Lord Mayor Ellis and a Mansion House committee.[2] Williams was a leader of the Magna Chartists;

---

1 Ibid., 2 April 1881. For Clark's role in the land nationalisation movement see Barry, Nationalisation, p. 72 n. 43. While serving as treasurer on the IWMA General Council (London), Clark took part in drawing up the programme calling for an independent working-class party and "The Nationalisation of Lands, Mines and the Means of Production" which was submitted to the 1872 Nottingham Congress. Clark evidently had some socialist sympathies then of the voluntary-associationist type, but he was strongly opposed to Marx personally and to centralized-state socialism (which would account for the timing of his departure from the Democratic Federation in mid-1883): See Clark's article "The International: Recollections," Socialist Review Vol. 12 No. 70 (July-September 1914). A few years after leaving the Federation, Clark joined the Fabian Society, according to H. W. Lee (Social-Democracy in Britain, p. 53); but Clark's strong anti-imperialism, which brought him to prominence as a pro-Boer Liberal MP in 1899-1900, suggests that he probably broke with Fabians also. Clark's opposition to the South African war (which the Fabians supported) cost him his parliamentary seat in 1900 (see Stephen Koss, The Pro-Boers, Chicago and London 1973, pp. 3, 46, 154).

2 Radical, 6 May 1882.

Lemon and Lane were both prominent in the Stratford Club, a loyal Federation affiliate whose members may be counted among the Federation's original socialist-tending nucleus; the Homerton group, whose foundation in 1881 has been mentioned earlier[1] was by this time part of Lane's Labour Emancipation League; and the "English Section" counted Lane and Williams, as well as Kitz, among its members: Such are the complex interconnections of persons and organizations that were typical of the London radical Left in this period.

From the later months of 1881 onward, as radical interest began to shift somewhat from Ireland and coercion to the burgeoning land nationalisation movement, we also find Democratic Federation members prominently mentioned in the Radical's reports of the Land Nationalisation Society's activities and Henry George's first British campaign. The members most frequently named in connection with land reform were Dr. G. B. Clark, Helen Taylor, Hyndman, Herbert Burrows, William Saunders and the Murray brothers.[2] In June 1882, many of the early leaders of the Federation, including Burrows, Dr. Clark, Robert Banner, Belfort Bax, James Macdonald and James Murray, sat down with Sam Bennett and William Webster of the Radical and others dissatisfied with the progress of LNS propaganda up to this time and organized a new "Land Nationalisation League" (apparently soon abandoned, as nothing more seems to have been

---

1 See Chapter IV above, p. 145.

2 Radical, 29 October 1881; 5 November 1881; 4 February 1882; 10 June 1882. Saunders, a radical journalist, is best known as one of Henry George's leading British followers. He started a Georgeist weekly paper, the Democrat, in 1884 and was elected to Parliament in 1885, but his signature (along with those of Dr. Clark and J. Finlay Finlayson) on the Federation's first pamphlet, The Condition of Ireland (August 1881) indicates that he was one of its foundation members. He evidently dropped out before it became socialist.

heard of it).[1] More will be said later of the Federation's close connection with George and land reform, an important influence on its development.

Centres of a New Socialist Propaganda: Soho Groups

It is not in the incipient Henry George movement and the specifically land-reform societies, however, that one finds the heaviest concentration of the more extreme working-class radicals and the clearest signs of an emerging socialist propaganda in the 1881-82 period of the Federation's establishment. These ultra-radicals (as they will be called henceforth with the understanding that the term includes the exiles closely associated with them) usually supported land nationalisation and often took part in the activities of the somewhat more middle-class land reform groups like the LNS, but they were on their home ground and conducted their most militant propaganda in certain clubs in three main centres — Marylebone, Soho, and the East End.[2] It was in a handful of societies in these districts that the avant-garde of the London radical Left were most active. A fourth centre, Southwark, may be added with the proviso that radical workers there, although as advanced as any on such key radical issues as Ireland, land nationalization and independent labour representation, were somewhat less ideological in their orienta-

---

1 Radical, 10 June and 1 July 1882.

2 On this point see the reminiscences of Ambrose G. Barker in Freedom, May, 1931, and the material drawn from Barker's unpublished autobiography in Shipley, Club Life and Socialism, p. 50.

tion and hence not so close to a definitively socialist viewpoint.[1]

Soho, the longest-established of these districts as a centre of ultra-radical activity, may appropriately be dealt with first. There were two main focal points of Soho ultra-radicalism: the Rose Street Club (usually identified in the radical press as "the Social Democratic Club, 6 Rose Street, Soho"), which was a lineal descendant of refugees' clubs which had existed in the area since the 1840s under various names and which now had separately-organized English, French and German "sections"; and the Manhood Suffrage League, whose weekly meetings at the Three Doves in Berwick Street continued an unbroken tradition of over thirty years of popular education in the principles of social and democratic revolution as taught by Bronterre O'Brien. Both of these groups, then, had a heritage reaching back into the Chartist period; their members often worked together, and some indication of the connections of both groups with the Democratic Federation has already been given.[2]

---

1 The justification for including Southwark radicalism under the "ultra-radical" heading is based partly on the discussion of it in Chapter IV above, and especially on Harry Quelch's account of the contribution of F. W. Soutter, the Southwark Radical Club and the Radical to his own "political education" (SDF How I Became a Socialist, pp. 70-78). For this and more on Southwark radicalism, including Helen Taylor's role, see below, pp. 231-34.

2 H. Collins & C. Abramsky, Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement: Years of the First International (1965), pp. 6-13; Kitz, "Recollections and Reflections," Freedom, February, 1912. The principal forerunner of the Rose Street Club seems to have been the German communist Arbeiter-bildungsverein (Workers' Educational Society), established in 1840. For many years it was unique among political organizations in Britain for its "distinctively socialist outlook." It took a prominent part in the IWMA, being one of the first societies to affiliate with it in 1864; the German club's manifesto on this occasion cited its close connections with "the Socialists and Chartists of this country" and explictly attacked "the rule of the capitalists" (Collins & Abramsky, p. 6; p.60).

The MSL, with its predominantly British membership and more purely Owenite and Chartist heritage, seems to have had the closer relationship to the Federation, no doubt partly because more of its members were willing to work with Hyndman.[1] At least two MSL men -- Patrick Hennessey and James Murray -- served on the Federation's first socialist executive in 1883, along with two others, A. J. Dadson and H. W. Rowland, who if not actual MSL members were certainly close associates.[2]

As already noted in Chapter II, above, the MSL's leading cadre of O'Brienites had worked together under several different names since the foundation of O'Brien's National Reform League in 1849. Until the end of the 1880s this "old guard" group of dedicated ultra-radical artisans kept up the traditions of self-education, open debate and active propaganda established at the "Eclectic Hall" in the early years of the National Reform League. The compatibility of some of their ideas with modern socialist principles was also pointed out earlier.

Both through their direct participation in the Democratic Federation and through their independent activities as a kind of revolutionary leaven in metropolitan clubland they helped to impress some of the main features of their own tradition on the new socialist movement. A typical

---

[1] This is borne out both by the prominence of MSL men among the foundation members of the Federation, and by the frequency with which Hyndman was invited to lecture at MSL meetings. The enthusiasm with which he was received is evident from the weekly reports of MSL activities in the club columns of Bradlaugh's National Reformer: for typical examples see the issues of 30 October and 1 December 1881. Many more of these reports show the close ties of the MSL with the Federation.

[2] For a full listing of this 15-member executive, see its manifesto Socialism Made Plain (July 1883). To my knowledge there is no complete listing available of the 1881 and '82 executives, but the MSL was certainly well represented.

example of the ways in which the MSL gained a hearing for advanced views in workingmen's clubs all over the metropolis was the transformation wrought in the Rev. Henry Solly's originally moderate and respectable Social and Political Education League by Charles Murray. Appointed Organizing Agent for the SPEL in 1880, Murray used his position to promote hundreds of lectures annually (often under deceptively innocuous titles) by some of the most revolutionary-minded agitators in town, including himself and his brother James, Edwin Dunn, Patrick Hennessey, R. D. Butler and many others. The SPEL became virtually a "front" organization for the MSL and Democratic Federation until Murray's dismissal from his post in 1886.[1]

From the earliest days of the Federation, Hyndman praised the energy and loyalty of the Soho O'Brienites. In the autumn of 1881, when more moderate radicals were already leaving the Federation in protest against its attacks on Gladstone, Chamberlain and "capitalist radicalism," Hyndman wrote to Helen Taylor that "Charles Murray and all the old '48 men are heartily with us. They have queer ideas on the currency and are fanatical on one or two points. But they are honest and energetic which are the main things."[2] In a pamphlet published early in 1883 Hyndman refers to them again in the course of a favourable comment on the Chartist leaders who had "had hope of real social reforms" in addition to the political reforms they demanded: "Fine fellows, indeed," wrote Hyndman. "Some of them are living now, and known to me, and I do think nobler men

---

1 Shipley, Club Life & Socialism, pp. 69-71.

2 Hyndman to Taylor, 2 October 1881, Mill-Taylor Collection, British Library of Political and Economic Science (hereafter referred to by the initials LSE because of its location at the London School of Economics).

with higher ideals have rarely come to the front in English politics."[1]

One of the main reasons the "old '48 men" of the MSL were admired by Hyndman and fitted so well into the Democratic Federation was their tradition of strong hostility toward Whigs and Liberals as class enemies of working people -- one of the most notable characteristics of the Federation, too, both before and after its adoption of socialism. As Hyndman observed in a general reference in his reminiscences to "the noble band of Chartists, whose work ... we Social-Democrats took up," these Chartist veterans had "found, as we have found, that the Whigs and the Liberals are the worst and most treacherous enemies of the people."[2] Another prominent characteristic of the Federation -- its long-continued tendency to dismiss the trade unions as "useless" to the majority of workers because dominated by a selfish "aristocracy of labour"[3] -- was also at least partly a contribution of the MSL O'Brienites. Although mostly members of small craft unions themselves, they had derived this attitude (as Hyndman evidently did also) from O'Brien and from the Owenite and Chartist traditions in general. It was rein-

---

1 Hyndman, The Coming Revolution in England (also published as an article in the International Review, Vol. 14, 1883). There are many other indications of the respect accorded to these Chartist veterans in the Democratic Federation: see, e.g., Hyndman's description of William Morgan (Record, p. 254), or the obituary of James Murray by Herbert Burrows (Justice, 9 March 1889) which outlines Murray's 40-year career "at the service of the workers" and describes him as one of the Federation's "most devoted and respected members."

2 Hyndman, Record, pp. 294-5.

3 For typical examples of this attitude see Hyndman's pamphlet The Social Reconstruction of England (1883) p.7 (also published as an article in International Review, Vol. 14), and the Federation's highly critical manifesto on trade unionism published in Justice, 6 September 1884.

forced in the late seventies and early eighties by Lassallean theory and by the conviction of ultra-radicals generally that Gladstonian Liberalism was the chief obstacle to an independent workers' party: they saw the trade-union leadership as the mainstay of Gladstone's working-class support.[1]

Further examples of the O'Brienites' contribution to the Federation will be noted later when its early development is examined in detail. At this point, however, a brief look at their own weekly forum at the Three Doves should help to illustrate the extent of their interest both in socialist ideas and in the prospect of an independent workers' party at the time of the Federation's foundation.

On 6 March 1881 -- the day after the second formative meeting of the Federation -- the Marxist cabinetmaker Adam Weiler[2] opened the Sunday evening meeting of the MSL with a lecture on "The Political Value of Trades' Unions." Since at least some of the "new party" promoters would have been present, it is likely that he chose the topic in an effort to counteract their tendency to disregard the unions in their planning. In any case, he "advocated the formation of a political party among the trades" which would be "distinct from all other parties,"

---

1 Henry Collins, "The Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation," in A. Briggs and J. Saville, eds., Essays in Labour History 1886-1923 (1971), pp. 53-5. Even Marx, it should perhaps be noted, did not fully recognize the revolutionary potential of the trade unions until the early years of the IWMA (Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement, 1965, pp. 51-2.

2 Weiler, a long-time ally and personal friend of Marx, was evidently a member of the MSL as well as an active representative of his union in the London Trades Council and the TUC in the 70s and 80s. He was, perhaps, the most adtive of the exiles in propagating Marx's views among English workingmen: see Shipley, Club Life and Socialism, pp. 63-7.

as well as the "establishing of a newspaper, and direct labor representation in Parliament."[1] The report gives no further details, but since Weiler later made good propaganda use of Engels' well-known series of articles in the Labour Standard urging trade unionists to abandon their policy of mainly industrial action and combine politically to bring about the "abolition of the wages system,"[2] it is a reasonable assumption that Weiler's talk covered the same ground.

A few months later — by which time the MSL had formally resolved that the Democratic Federation's programme was "worthy of public support"[3] and its members had begun to publicize "The Democratic Federation and its Objects" at meetings of other radical clubs[4] — the MSL began a series of meetings in which it evidently sought to explore the subject of socialism from several different viewpoints.

---

1 National Reformer, 13 March 1881.

2 See the article by James Macdonald in How I Became a Socialist (originally published in Justice, 11 July 1896). The Engels articles appeared (as unsigned leaders) in May, June and July, 1881; for reprints see Marx and Engels on Britain (Moscow, 1953) or other similar collections.

3 National Reformer, 26 June 1881.

4 This was the title of one such lecture, given by R. D. Butler at the Marylebone Central Democratic Association, a new left-wing club which will be discussed below, on 25 September 1881 (National Reformer, 25 September 1881). Richard Butler, a compositor, was a long-time MSL member who was on the Federation's first executive. A fiery speaker with a special interest in Ireland who had taken part in the foundation of the First International, Butler was suspected of anarchist tendencies by Hyndman, but evidently continued to work with the Federation through the eighties (See Shipley, Club Life & Socialism, pp. 53-4, and Hyndman, Record, p. 254). The fact that the Federation was often publicized at clubs whose members could already be expected to be familiar with it suggests that ordinary workingmen must have often attended meetings at clubs dominated by ultra-radicals.

One of these was the August 21 meeting featuring Edwin Dunn's lecture "Who are the Revolutionists and What are their aims?", which has already been discussed.[1] The brief report in the National Reformer states the MSL's conclusion that Dunn "made a good defense for the socialistic party in Europe and America." Dunn's socialism, as the previous discussion of his views has indicated, was as yet somewhat vaguely defined, but he seems to have tended more toward the Lassallean than the Marxist school. He was a fairly frequent lecturer at MSL meetings, as were some of the MSL members at the meetings of his club, the Rose Street "English Section."[2]

Dunn's talk must have aroused interest in his subject matter, for on the following Sunday (August 28), "a large meeting" turned out at the Three Doves to hear a lecture on "Socialism." The focus this time was on specifically "English" socialism, which in this period still meant Owenism. The lecturer (identified only as a "Mr. Sheppard") "in an able manner ... pointed out what he considered the defects of Robert Owen's system," but was "on the whole ... favorable to socialism" (whether to the general idea or to some distinct type is not indicated). He succeeded in stimulating "an excellent debate."[3] A fortnight later (September 11), socialist ideas were again the theme of "a good discussion" at the Sunday evening MSL meeting. The discussion this time was opened with a lecture on "The Working Man in Relation to Nature and Society" by

---

1 28 August 1881.

2 Typically, on one Sunday in December, 1881, Charles Murray spoke at Rose Street on "Free Trade: What it has done for the Capitalists and Landlords"; and on the following Sunday Dunn addressed the MSL meeting on "Poverty: its Causes and Cures" (National Reformer, 11 and 18 December 1881).

3 Ibid., 4 September 1881.

Joseph Martin, who spoke "in favor of the State owning the land, co-operation, and the emancipation of labor from capitalists."[1]

At the last meeting in September, 1881, Adam Weiler took the floor for a lecture on the Communist Manifesto -- evidently a subject of much interest to the audience at the Three Doves, for Weiler had already given a talk there on the Manifesto (at this time still the main source through which Marx's views were introduced to English workingmen) in early August.[2] This second lecture, given "by request of members and friends," was reported in the Labour Standard (2 October 1881) with considerable verbatim quotation.[3] Weiler compared "German or true socialism" with spurious brands of "reactionary socialism" and with communism. He underscored the "conclusive arguments" of the Manifesto in regard to the "history of the bourgeoisie and proletariat," and emphasized the doctrine that in achieving the "zenith of its power" through the "creation of the modern proletariat" the ruling bourgeoisie was inevitably "forging the weapons for its own destruction."

By the autumn of 1881 the views of Marx were also being set before MSL audiences by H. M. Hyndman (although as noted above, he was evidently not yet a thorough convert); he lectured on October 23 on "The Tyranny of Capital in America and England" and was praised for an "admirable" talk, "well received and followed by a good debate."[4] Lassalleite

---

1 Ibid., 18 September 1881.

2 Radical, 13 August 1881.

3 Reprinted in Shipley, Club Life and Socialism, pp. 66-7.

4 National Reformer, 30 October 1881.

socialism, too, was of interest to the club, quite naturally in view of its strong representation among the exiles and the popularization of Lassallean views in John Sketchley's Principles of Social Democracy (1879); in January 1882 one of their meetings was devoted to a lecture on "Lasalle and his Followers."[1]

MSL members who gravitated toward socialism in the early eighties -- at least those who worked most closely with Hyndman and the Federation -- seemed to favour the Marxian concept of a strong centrally-organized socialist state somewhat more than other forms of socialism, perhaps because they found it more compatible with their own strongest traditions: their long insistence upon the nationalization of the land and other natural resources, as well as credit and banking, could be logically extended to include nationalization of industry, and their idea of gaining working-class political power through an independent parliamentary party necessarily implied a central government strong enough to institute sweeping social reforms (without any necessary conflict with their democratic ideals). However, cross-currents of influence deriving from the Owenite tradition, Lassallean theory and the ideals of decentralization and federalism exemplified by the Paris Commune pushed some of them strongly toward voluntary-associationist forms of socialism and anarchist ideals.

One notable example of this anti-centralist tendency is William Harrison Riley, the O'Brienite editor of the International Herald in the early 1870s whose views as a leading representative of ultra-radical thinking at that time were discussed at some length in Chapter II above.

---

[1] Ibid., 22 January 1882.

In 1884 Riley wrote to Justice from his new home in Massachusetts, taking a view quite different from his earlier ideas. He urged socialists to give up their efforts to reform governments and instead prepare the way for the total abolition of governments by building a "new society" based upon "equitable voluntary association, for the benefit of each person in society ... without masters — elected or hereditary."[1]

The seeds of conflict between the centralist and anti-centralist viewpoints were present from the first stirrings of the new socialism, but seemed to have little practical effect until socialism had become fully established as a movement distinct from non-socialist radicalism. Socialists and semi-socialists of both tendencies at first worked harmoniously, often within the same organizations, seemingly more aware of their common goals than of the differences which would later drive them apart. Although centralist, or "Parliamentary," socialism was to become the dominant form in Britain, there was no certainty of this in the first years of the eighties. Representatives of the anti-centralist tendency illustrated by Riley's letter — including some who would later move altogether beyond the pale of socialism into outright anarchism — contributed as much as anyone to the original emergence of the new movement.

The English members of the Rose Street Social Democratic Club, mostly younger and more impatient with the parliamentary route to social revolution than the men of the Manhood Suffrage League,[2] and more directly under the influence of the Lassallean and anarchist exiles who

---

[1] Justice, 12 April 1884.

[2] Some of the MSL men, however, must have been members of the "English Section," for Frank Kitz's memoirs say its founders included some of the old O'Brienites who had belonged to the IWMA. (Freedom, January and February 1912).

predominated at Rose Street,[1] tended more toward the anti-centralist viewpoint (with exceptions, of course, such as Jack Williams, who became a stalwart of the Federation and a steadfast Marxist). They also did more open-air propaganda among the poorest class of working people, including the casual labourers and the down-and-out who were not part of the artisan world of the political clubs; they seem to have been the first to carry European socialist ideas from Soho into the East London slums. "From the West we extended our work into the East End," recalled Frank Kitz:

> Mile End Waste was our outdoor rallying point, and indoors -- let not the temperance reader be shocked -- the clubrooms of various publichouses, where under the guise of debating societies or similar harmless-sounding titles we pursued our propagandist work. The Radical Clubs had still a leaven amongst them of Chartists and Republicans, and their platforms were at our disposal.[2]

---

1 These gained control of the club after the arrival of Johann Most and a wave of other "Left" socialists driven out of Germany following the passage of Bismarck's Anti-Socialist law in 1878. Most's bombastic and foolhardy anarchism -- or "fiery eloquence and poetic fervour" from the viewpoint of admirers like Frank Kitz -- soon caused a schism in the old German Communist Workers' Educational Society (Communistische Arbeiterbildungsverein), predecessor of the Rose Street Club. The "State Socialists of the Marxian School" seceded and established another club in Tottenham Street, Marylebone. This retained the old title of "CABV," but became popularly known as the "German Club" (although like the original body it contained other nationalities). This evidently happened in early 1880, about the time the original body set up its headquarters in Rose Street and became known as the "Rose Street Club." The "English Section" of the club was established in 1877 (see note 1, following page): Kitz, "Recollections and Reflections," Freedom, March, 1912; Lee and Archbold, Social Democracy in Britain, pp. 59-60; Engels to Becker, 1 April 1880, Marx-Engels Sel. Corr., p. 380, cited in E. P. Thompson, William Morris, p. 321.

2 Freedom, February, 1912.

Frank Kitz, as noted in Chapter II above, had been a young recruit of the "old guard" O'Brienite group when they founded the MSL in the mid-seventies. In 1877 he played a central role in establishing a formal link between native ultra-radicals and foreign revolutionists through what he called "an English section of the Socialist party." Kitz may have exaggerated in retrospect the degree of conscious socialism present at the outset, but the "English Section" evidently intended to revive the fraternal spirit of the First International by operating as a new "English Revolutionary Society, which, working with the foreign element, was to take its part in the International Socialist movement."[1] There are many brief references to its existence in the radical press and reminiscence literature, but Kitz seems to have left the best description of the nature and tone of its propaganda in his series of reminiscences published in the anarchist journal Freedom, January-July 1912.

As the old Chartists of the Manhood Suffrage League had often done during the "years of triumphant reaction and apathy" after the decline of the IWMA, the Land and Labour League, and other political and trade union movements of the early 1870s, the "English Section" in their day-to-day propaganda often concealed their real aims under a thin cloak

---

[1] Ibid. Kitz is vague about the date of the "English Section's" origin. But a comparison of his account with contemporary reports in the West Central News (a local paper) of the establishment in Soho of an international Social Democratic Club which fits Kitz's description leaves little doubt that both sources refer to the same organization, and that it was formed in 1877 -- not 1879 or later as historians have generally believed. The initial meeting was reported in the 25 August 1877 issue of the West Central News; for excerpts from this and subsequent reports up to February 1878 see Shipley, Club Life and Socialism, pp. 61-2. Kitz's mention of Kropotkin's presence in London when the "English Section" was founded further confirms this 1877 dating, for Kropotkin was indeed on his first visit to England at this time (Barry, Nationalisation, Ch. 5, n. 7).

of respectability. They routinely invented bogus "front" organizations and used innocuous lecture titles to gain a hearing in quarters unfriendly to openly-avowed revolutionists.[1] For instance, when they determined to take advantage of the new wave of public interest in the land question at the beginning of the eighties "with the view of starting a no-rent agitation and an onslaught upon landlordism," Kitz recalled,

> We became for a time the Local Rights Association for Rental and Sanitary Reform. The Daily Chronicle, amongst other papers, reported our earlier meetings, although they said there were some suspicious Irish and German names in our membership. We explored the slums and published our reports of the homes of the workers, giving the names of the titled and lesser landlord and owners, thus causing some commotion in dark places.[2]

With the help of "an anonymous subscriber" Kitz and his comrades also published a pamphlet showing how a number of aristocratic families — described as "descendants of the pimps, procurers, courtesans, and informers" who had served royalty in the past — had come to "have London in their grip." The group beguiled a retired policeman turned missioner "in that terrestrial inferno, St. Luke's" into letting them hold meetings in his mission hall; there they succeeded for a time in spreading

---

1 Freedom, April, 1912. For this reason their activities are difficult to follow in the contemporary press unless one knows the names of a few of them. Even when they spoke in places where there was no need for disguises, they often appeared under whatever organizational alias they were using at the time: e.g., when Edwin Dunn addressed the MSL on "who are the Revolutionists and what are their Aims" he was introduced as "secretary of the Social Rights Association." (National Reformer, 28 August 1881).

2 Freedom, April, 1912. Contemporary references indicate that the group was actually called the "Social Rights," not "Local Rights," Association.

their own "no rent and anti-landlord" gospel until the missioner discovered what they were up to and threw them out.[1]

Meanwhile, in their individual capacities they pursued this campaign on the working-class housing question, as they did other campaigns, through letters to the press. One such letter indicates the sort of positive reforms they had in mind. In the autumn of 1882 Edwin Dunn complained to the Weekly Dispatch that the recent report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings, though underscoring the seriousness of the housing situation, had given little cause for hope that anything meaningful would be done about it "unless the working men take matters into their own hands, and work out their own salvation." Dunn urged them to press for a scheme of compulsory clearance of unfit properties by local authorities — with no compensation for either owners or leaseholders — to be followed by immediate rebuilding with decent homes to be let at rentals only just high enough to cover the costs of building and maintenance.[2] It may be noted that this plan closely anticipated the "artisans' dwellings" scheme included in the programme of immediate "palliatives" or "stepping stones" on the road to socialism formulated by the Democratic Federation in 1883.

The press quickly discovered the real objects of the "Association for Rental and Sanitary Reform" and stopped publicizing it, but Kitz and his friends soon set up their own primitive "printery" in slum quarters in Shoreditch. With an old roller hand-press, a paving-stone for an inkslab, and a minimum of other necessary equipment eked out by

---

1 Freedom, April, 1912.

2 Weekly Dispatch, 29 October 1882.

"involuntary contributions" from printing firms where some of the members were employed, they set out to "permeate the mass of the people with a spirit of revolt against their oppressors and against the squalid misery which results from their monopoly of the means of life." Working by night with candles stuck in their composing cases, they ground out manifestoes and leaflets with such titles as "Fight or Starve: an Appeal to the Unemployed," "Are we Over-Populated?: an Answer to the Malthusians," "Revenge," and "An Appeal to the Army, Navy, and Police." Then they "sallied out on nocturnal bill-sticking expeditions, and despite the destruction by the police of some of our handiwork, we managed to placard the East End with incendiary manifestoes."[1]

It would be hard to say how effective this clandestine revolutionary activity of the English Section "printing group" might have been. But Kitz and his comrades -- who, as he points out, included members of the closely-allied Labour Emancipation League (discussed below) and the Democratic Federation[2] -- never by any means confined themselves to isolated underground work of this sort, though they carried it on for several years. At the same time they were in the forefront of every public agitation involving the Federation and all the other more or less advanced groups on the radical scene.

One such agitation -- widely supported by more moderate radicals as well as ultra-Leftists like the English Section -- was the protest against the Gladstone Government's prosecution and imprisonment of Johann Most in the spring of 1881. Few English radicals would have gone

---

1 Freedom, April, 1912.

2 Ibid.

so far as Most did in his Freiheit article on the assasination of Czar Alexander — described by Kitz as "an exultant article upon the death of the tyrant"[1] — but the prosecution was widely regarded as the thin end of the wedge for a broad attack on the exercise of free speech and democratic rights in general, especially as it came right on the heels of the Government's new coercion measures in Ireland. The Weekly Dispatch, for instance, condemned the prosecution as an example of Governmental "truckling to Continental Despots" (many believed it was undertaken at the instigation of Russia or at the request of Bismarck) and the sentencing of Most to sixteen months' hard labour as "savage."[2]

The Democratic Federation (by then the SDF) several years later described the protest against the Freiheit prosecution as its own first major agitation,[3] but actually Most's trial began several months before the Federation was formally founded. It was Kitz and the "English Section" who took the initiative in setting up a "Freiheit Defence Committee," issuing manifestoes and appeals for funds, organ-

---

1 Freedom, March, 1912.

2 Weekly Dispatch, 3 July 1881. There was a second prosecution of Freiheit personnel about a year later in connection with an article on the Phoenix Park Murders which the Government held contained "incitements to commit murder." For reports of the trials of William Mertens, a German compositor, and others, see the Dispatch, 28 May 1882 and subsequent issues.

3 See the 1886 SDF pamphlet John E. Williams and the Early History of the Social-Democratic Federation.

izing demonstrations and starting an English edition of Freiheit.[1] Future members of the Federation, however, were indeed prominent in the agitation; for instance, Dr. G. B. Clark, R. D. Butler and F. W. Soutter helped to lead the first public demonstration against the prosecution,[2] and the story of the intrepid Jack Williams standing outside the Old Bailey while the trial went on, selling copies of the English Freiheit which contained a translation of the offending article, is well known.[3]

Like the coercion issue, the Freiheit case, with its by-product of widespread radical indignation, provided the kind of opportunity for spreading advanced views while defending traditional democratic positions which the ultra-radicals always eagerly seized. "If it had been the purpose of the Government and their Russian allies to spread the doctrines of Socialism," claimed Frank Kitz, "they could not have chosen a better course than the prosecution."[4] While it is doubtful if the case contributed much directly to the spread of socialist doctrine

---

1 Freedom, March, 1912; Radical, 2 April 1881 (subsequent issues cover the whole Freiheit case in detail). There is a mimeographed copy of a handwritten circular appealing for funds and support, signed by Frank Kitz and John Lord as respective secretary and treasurer of the committee, in the Mill-Taylor Collection (LSE), Vol. XVIII, Folios 234-5. Seven numbers of the English Freiheit, 24 April — 5 June 1881, were issued by the committee (Reminiscences of A. G. Barker, Freedom, May, 1931).

2 Radical, loc. cit.

3 John E. Williams, etc. Actually Kitz, who edited the paper, took good care to keep himself and its distributors from being enmeshed in the prosecution: He waited until the preliminary hearing when the Government prosecutor, Poland, read a translation of Most's article, then published it as "an eloquent speech addressed by Poland to the Magistrate" (Freedom, March, 1912).

4 Freedom, April, 1912.

per se, it certainly helped to strengthen the growing radical curiosity about the German Social Democrats and the sympathy with the plight of the exiles which may be seen in the radical press at this time.

Another popular cause which provided good propaganda opportunities for the English Section and allied groups was the emigration question -- a traditional indicator of degrees of militance among English radical workingmen -- which became the subject of a noteworthy agitation in the spring of 1882. Speaking of the English Section's propaganda among East London workers in this period, Kitz recalled that they often "had to combat [landlord and capitalist] agents, who advocated thrift, emigration, and Malthusianism as alternatives to Socialism. We routed them in many a stormy meeting, and the emigrationists had frequently to emigrate in undignified haste from the meetings they themselves had convened."[1]

One of the most notable of such meetings took place on Mile End Waste on 30 April 1882 and was reported in the Radical. This meeting, briefly mentioned earlier, is worth examining in some detail, not only as a typical example of the English Section and their allies at work, but as an illustration of the strong elements of continuity in left-wing popular agitations both before and after the emergence of the new socialism: continuity in style, language, ideas and even personnel. In all these aspects this 1882 demonstration was remarkably similar both to earlier ultra-radical agitations and to later ones conducted under avowed socialist auspices.

---

1 Freedom, February, 1912.

It was evidently organized in reaction to a campaign for a scheme of assisted emigration to Canada which was undertaken that spring by Lord Mayor Ellis and a Mansion House committee of MPs and other dignitaries in conjunction with a Canadian Government emigration agent and the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Reports of "meetings of the unemployed" were cropping up in the press with increasing frequency in the spring of 1882; the Lord Mayor evidently was responding to these and to the plea of a deputation of unemployed artisans who had personally called on him to ask his help. As the "Mansion House Emigration Fund" committee was being organized, the Canadian emigration agent was holding public meetings to obtain resolutions of support for a programme which included a guarantee by the railway to pay part of the cost of passage for 200 men and their families and employ the men for at least six months (the remainder of the passage costs were to be raised by public subscription). He was evidently successful at first, but at an April 13th meeting at the Mansion House some pointed objections to the scheme must have been raised, for one of the committee heatedly "ridiculed the idea that the movement was one that was got up either for the good of the Dominion of Canada or the Pacific Railway Company." It was started "on the contrary, with a single-hearted wish to help the unemployed."[1]

The language of the reply strongly suggests both the tone and the source of the unreported question. Some unfriendly infiltrator had served notice that the ultra-radical Left was not impressed with the generosity of this new emigration plan and intended to make an issue of it.

---

1 Weekly Dispatch, 9 and 16 April, 1882.

By the day of the anti-emigrationists' meeting on Mile End Waste -- billed as a "Public Meeting of the Unemployed ... to consider the question whether Emigration is a sufficient remedy for the distress of the Working Classes"[1] -- they may have been beating a dead horse, for there had been almost an "absolute want of response" to the appeal for public subscriptions and the discouragement of the Mansion House committee was evident.[2] But it was the opportunity to score propaganda points that mattered most to the organizers of the protest meeting, not the specific emigration scheme at issue.

Tom S. Lemon of the Stratford Dialectical and Radical Club, presiding, opened the meeting by asserting that the scheme was being promoted "in the interest of Canadian railway speculators and capitalists" who had "led their dupes to suppose they were going to an Eldorado." In reality it was a place where outdoor work was possible for only a few months out of the year; the rest of the time a man must "beg or starve" if he had no land or capital of his own. Frank Kitz, sounding the theme of working-class solidarity which for years was the keynote of ultra-radical agitation, whether consciously socialist or not, maintained that "the distress of the workers was caused by an unjust social system, and they would not mend their condition by going out as wage slaves to compete with Canadian workmen." Taking the traditional stance of advanced radicals in countering the emigration idea by urging "Home Colonization" and public employment, demands which were also to be incorporated in the new socialist programmes of the eighties, Kitz

---

1 "The Emigration Trick," Radical, 6 May 1882.

2 Weekly Dispatch, 30 April 1882.

moved the main resolution:

> That in the opinion of this meeting, the attempt to raise £6000 by public charity to supply Canadian speculators with cheap labour, is an impudent fraud, and we protest against the working class leaving home and country whilst millions of acres of land lie uncultivated at home, and we are further of the opinion that home colonisation and the institution of public works would be the most effectual way to meet the distress of the unemployed.[1]

Jack Williams then spoke in support of the resolution on behalf of the Magna Charta Association, and Joseph Lane, representing the Homerton Social Democratic Club -- something of a Hackney extension of the English Section -- claimed that 15 million of the current 40 million acres of waste land were cultivable, and argued that "to talk of emigration and overpopulation under such circumstances was to consolidate the power of the Land Monopolists and Capitalists." The resolution was carried unanimously, as was a second resolution "to the effect that the only Emigration at all necessary or desirable was that of the aristocratic and capitalist classes."[2] This put into words the theme of one of the banners carried to the meeting, which according to Kitz "depicted an angry armed crowd chasing the landlords and capitalists into the sea."[3]

There was evidently no direct mention of socialism at this demonstration, and there is no indication that the speakers departed from the immediate issue to engage in any form of abstract discussion of social theory. Yet it would seem that Kitz in his memoirs was not unduly wide

---

1 Radical, 6 May 1882.

2 Ibid.

3 Freedom, February, 1912.

of the mark in referring to this "great anti-emigration demonstration" and other typical activities of the English Section and their allies as examples of early "socialist" agitation: There are many indications in the language these ultra-radicals used on such occasions that they were now approaching traditional radical issues like the emigration question from a generally socialist standpoint. Another small, but more direct, indication that they were doing so at the time of the agitation just discussed is that only a fortnight before the Mile End Waste meeting, Kitz had addressed one of the participating groups, the Stratford Dialectical and Radical Club, on "The Aims of the Socialists."[1]

While the propaganda of men like Lane, Kitz, Williams and Lemon in the 1881-82 period shows strong elements of continuity with the ultra-radical propaganda of a decade earlier, the direct attack upon capitalists and the whole "capitalist class" as being just as much congenital enemies of the workers as landlords and the aristocracy indicates in itself the presence of a more definite socialist influence. As far as theoretical discussion is concerned, it may be observed that even when the socialist movement had become more definitely established, direct attempts at indoctrination in socialist theory seem to have been kept to a minimum in public agitations on specific issues. For instance, a major Democratic Federation campaign on the emigration question, conducted several months after the Federation's open declaration for socialism in 1883, involved no more overt inculcation of socialist doctrine than the agitation just considered. The Mile End Waste anti-emigration meeting seems indeed almost like a dress rehearsal for the later Federation protest

---

[1] Radical, 15 April 1882.

against "State-Aided Emigration," which is discussed in the next chapter.

With these observations in mind — that is, with the understanding that the "socialism" he refers to was at first more a matter of general orientation than of closely-defined theory — Frank Kitz's interpretation of the contribution to the new movement made by the English Section and associated groups would seem substantially correct:

> Our record for a small band of men working under difficulties was no mean one. From Marylebone in the West to Stratford in the East we had pushed our propaganda. By our persistent distribution of literature and championing of Socialism in lecture halls and schoolrooms — in fact, wherever Socialism was being discussed, we were present as upholders of the cause — we could fairly claim a large share in bringing about the awakened interest and enthusiasm for Socialism which prevailed at this time, especially in East London.[1]

Other Centres of Nascent Socialism: East London, Marylebone and Southwark

The English Section originated in Soho and had its headquarters there in the hall of the Rose Street Club, but because of its strong East London orientation the focus of this discussion has inevitably shifted toward that area. Some of the East End ultra-radical groups which worked in close association with the Soho-based agitators — particularly the Stratford Dialectical and Radical Club, the Homerton Social-Democratic Club and Joseph Lane's Labour Emancipation League — became important centres of nascent socialism in their own right. They were also closely connected with the Democratic Federation up to about 1885 — although

---

1 Freedom, April, 1912.

afterwards many of their members veered sharply left under the influence of men like Lane, Kitz, Dunn and Ambrose Barker, first turning away from the Federation and "Parliamentary" socialism to join the breakaway Socialist League,[1] then drifting rapidly towards a militantly purist anarchist-communism[2] and taking the League with them.

This drift of one section of the new socialist movement toward anarchism and isolation, however, had hardly begun in the years before the movement itself had taken definite shape. Signs of the tendency were always present, but until the centralist or "Parliamentary" approach to socialism had become more or less the British norm, the future anarchist-communist leaders were still an integral part of a general, undifferentiated radical and socialist Left. The available information on the East London societies just mentioned, although limited, tends to confirm and add detail to the impressionistic picture of the ultra-radical contribution to the new socialism sketched by Frank Kitz.

---

1 Kitz, when mentioning in his memoirs the connection of many of his English Section and Labour Emancipation League comrades with the Federation, summed up the attitudes of this "anti-Parliamentary" faction quite bluntly: Those who had joined the Federation (he himself did not) had been "wasting their time in combatting the opportunism and Jingoism of their shifty leader"; so when the split came, the "purely propagandist and non-Parliamentary objects" of Morris's Socialist League appealed strongly to them and they "joined it at once," merging their own local organizations, including the "printing group", into the League to take advantage of "its possibilities of a wider field of propaganda." In decamping from the "printery," incidentally, Kitz and his friends "decided to liquidate our indebtedness to the slum landlord by leaving him our ink-slab (the previously-mentioned paving-stone) as being akin to his own heart": Freedom, April, 1912.

2 Joseph Lane's publication in 1887 of An Anti-State Communist Manifesto is a notable landmark in the manifestation of this tendency.

In addition to these groups, which are the primary concern here and will be discussed next, one other merits a brief mention. This is the Magna Charta Association, which also demands recognition as an important constituent element of the milieu under consideration. To say it contributed in a direct way to the rise of socialism per se would probably be a distortion. Its "programme," so far as it can be determined from its organ The Englishman (published 1874-1886), was a varying mish-mash of confused and often contradictory demands. Nevertheless the Magna Chartists represented for many years a strong "us against them" feeling of class solidarity amongst the poorest and least educated workers: a sense of common grievance against the privileged and powerful for which the hapless claimant to the Tichborne estates, their chief concern, had become a powerful emotional symbol.[1]

The organization was strongest in the East End, with a number of branches there, though there was also a "Westminster Branch" in Soho and a few provincial branches. It had close connections with the Democratic Federation in the early eighties,[2] though it was somewhat wary of Hyndman;[3] and then as in the seventies, it remained in the forefront of ultra-radical agitation, showing the hallmarks of radical militance in

---

1 John Saville, "The Background to the Revival of Socialism in England," Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, No. 11 (Autumn 1965), p. 15.

2 See, e.g., branch reports in the Englishman for 7 January and 10 and 17 June, 1882; and Pall Mall Gazette, 8 September 1881.

3 Pall Mall Gazette, loc. cit.

its strong anti-landlord, anti-emigration and anti-Coercion attitudes.[1]

Jack Williams, who felt that the Magna Chartists represented a sort of undeveloped, unconscious "socialism of a kind,"[2] worked from within the organization to turn it in a definitely socialist direction. But since it did not develop any distinctly socialist viewpoint, and continued to be mainly preoccupied with the Tichborne case,[3] the Magna Charta Association does not quite fit the pattern of the other ultra-radical groups under consideration: it probably should be regarded as more of a passive recipient, or target, of early socialist propaganda than an active contributor to its development such as the Labour Emancipation League.

The position of Joseph Lane's Labour Emancipation League as a body which began an active socialist propaganda well in advance of the Democratic Federation has been recognized by labour historians for some time.[4] Since it was connected with the Federation by both dual

---

1 Its position as one of the leading forces in the Anti-Coercion movement is particularly noteworthy, as the Radical's coverage of the movement in early 1881 reveals; e.g., when Davitt's arrest was "solemnly condemned" and the "obnoxious Coercion Bill" angrily burned in the February 13 Hyde Park demonstration that marked the high point of the movement, the Magna Chartists were "principal among those who came forward," having "set all the divisions of their organization to work in order to make the affair a success" (Radical, 19 February 1881).

2 See the interview of Williams in How I Became a Socialist.

3 For typical contemporary reports of the continuing "Tichborneite" activity in the early eighties, see the Weekly Dispatch, 16 and 22 October 1882.

4 Henry Pelling, in Origins of the Labour Party, p. 22, labels the LEL "the first indigenous Socialist organization in the revival of the 1880s," but E. P. Thompson's earlier description of it as the "first Socialist organization in London with any influence"(William Morris, p. 331; emphasis mine) is more accurate.

memberships and a close working relationship which culminated in a formal affiliation in mid-1884 (terminated, however, by the schism at the end of the year), it must be regarded as an important influence in the Federation's own development toward socialism. The LEL remains, though, a rather obscure organization. Its origins, its activities, its membership and its connections with the Federation and other groups dealt with here have never been described thoroughly, and perhaps could never be fully reconstructed.[1]

Its principal founder and leader, however — a man similar in age, background and views to his close associates Frank Kitz and Edwin Dunn — became one of the best-known grass-roots socialist agitators in London. Joseph Lane, about 30 years old at the beginning of the 1880s, drove a light cart for a living but had already chosen revolution as his lifelong profession. Described as a "born organiser" and "intensely earnest" agitator by his friend Ambrose G. Barker,[2] and as a "tireless propagandist" by Harry Lee of the (S)DF,[3] Lane had been politically active from his teens. In 1871 he had joined the IWMA; he took part in the Republican agitation of the following years and belonged to the O'Brienite group that founded the Manhood Suffrage League; from the late '70s, with Dunn, he was a leader of a leftward swing in Marylebone radicalism; with Kitz, he was active in the Rose Street "English Section"

---

1 A close study of the radical press, local East London papers and reminiscence sources might, however, go some way toward providing the basis for a fuller profile of the LEL. The best existing description, that in E. P. Thompson, William Morris, pp. 325 and 331-2, is based mainly on Lane materials in the Nettlau Collection, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

2 A. G. Barker, reminiscences in Freedom, May, 1931.

3 H. W. Lee and E. Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, p. 50.

and helped run its "printing group," while also helping with the printing of the Radical.[1] Lane also read widely in political theory, and was evidently most strongly influenced by Lassallean ideas at first (he later swung toward Kropotkin's views). He was one of the first British radicals to arrive at a definitely socialist position: as E. P. Thompson has observed, "from 1878 onwards he was associated with every move to set an organized Socialist propaganda afoot."[2]

One noteworthy move in this direction was the establishment in Hackney of one of the two main predecessors of the LEL. This was the Homerton Social Democratic Club, evidently formed as an East London extension of the Rose Street Club under auspices of the "English Section." Its foundation as a new branch of the "Socialistic Workingmen's Association," meeting at the Lamb and Flag public house in Homerton, was reported in May 1881.[3] The new body urged workers to "rally around the flag of the Socialist Labour Party," which alone could "obtain the rights of labour and the freedom of the working classes from slavery and dependence."[4] There were no actual organizations called the "Socialistic Workingmen's Association" or the "Socialist Labour Party," of course, but these were typical of the variety of impressive-sounding names used by the exiles and their English Section comrades, whose groups really had no definite formal titles.

---

1 Thompson, Morris, p. 325, p. 327; Pelling, Origins, p. 22, note 2; Shipley, Club Life, p. 84.

2 Thompson, loc. cit.

3 Radical, 14 May 1881.

4 Ibid.

The little Homerton group, however, under the tutelage of Lane, Kitz, Dunn, Andreas Scheu and other well-known agitators, carried on weekly discussions with a distinctly socialist and revolutionary flavour until early 1882 (Some of the lectures there have been mentioned in the discussion of the Radical in Chapter IV above), when the police threatened the landlord of the Lamb and Flag "with the loss of his licence if he did not get rid of his obnoxious tenants."[1] The landlord duly complied, but reports in the Radical and other evidence indicates that the group continued active until at least mid-1883 under the "Homerton Social Democratic Club" name -- although by the time of its eviction from the Lamb and Flag, Lane was already organizing other similar groups of workingmen around the East End which soon became collectively known as the Labour Emancipation League.[2] The Homerton Club's participation in the Mile End Waste anti-emigration demonstration later in the spring of 1882 was mentioned above; just after this the club reacted to the shock of the Phoenix Park murders in Dublin by adding its voice to the militant radical minority (including the Democratic Federation) which still supported the Irish rebellion and condemned the outcry for renewed and harsher coercion measures. Its fiery May 10th resolution on the assassination, a good sample of its general attitude, ran as follows:

---

1 Radical, 4 February 1882. Lane did everything he could to make an issue of the club's ouster and get it re-instated in its meeting place, but evidently to no avail: Official replies to his complaints to the Police Commissioner and the Home Secretary and a sympathetic letter from Joseph Cowen may be seen with other Lane material in BM Add. MSS 46345, fos. 39-42.

2 Thompson, Morris, p. 331.

> This club, while recognizing that the Secretaries for Ireland belonged to the idle and useless portion of Society, and are therefore the natural enemies of the wealth producers, nevertheless regrets their murder. At the same time we sincerely regret the murder of thousands of wealth producers in Ireland, slaughtered by landlords and their tools, the police, military and crowbar brigade, and we hereby express our belief that these murders will not cease till landlordism has been abolished and Irishmen allowed to exercise their undoubted right of governing themselves.[1]

Soon after the Homerton club's foundation, the organizers of the July, 1881 "International Socialist Congress" -- the revolutionary gathering described earlier in which Edwin Dunn took a leading part -- had contacted Lane, urging himtto send a delegate from the club "as there will be so few English groups represented" and offering to provide lecturers for the club. Lane himself attended the Congress, and evidently impressed the foreign comrades favourably, for on August 12 Marie LeCompte (who, representing American anarchists, had given one of the most fiery addresses at the Congress) wrote Lane that she would find it a "special pleasure" to meet the Homerton club, which had "proved its spirit at the International Congress," and give the members an account of "the situation in America."[2]

The Lane papers in the John Burns collection, from which these examples of Lane's and the Homerton club's contacts with foreign revolutionists have been drawn, also include evidence of Lane's wide connec-

---

1 Radical, 13 May 1882.

2 BM Add. MSS. 46345, fos. 34-38.

tions with native London radical groups, including the Democratic Federation and the land societies, which were not on the extreme revolutionary fringe. These groups frequently availed themselves of Lane's talents as ubiquitous grassroots organizer and his firsthand knowledge of local conditions. In December 1883, for instance, Arthur J. Dadson (a member of the Federation's executive and a signer of Socialism Made Plain) wrote to Lane for information on "the bad condition of the homes of the poor in your district" (Hackney) for a series of articles he planned to write. These were to describe in detail "cases of severity and oppression on the part of landlords" as well as of "unsanitary conditions." Dadson also wanted Lane to supply the names and addresses of the owners of the worst "human pigsties," some of them vestrymen, whom he particularly wished to expose.[1] At about the same time, Lane was helping Percy Frost, who had contacted him on behalf of the Land Reform Union (Frost was also one of the new middle-class converts to socialism who had recently joined the Federation) to arrange for a good representation of East London workers at an upcoming Henry George meeting in St. James's Hall. This was to be the beginning of George's second British campaign. Frost also asked Lane to send delegates from the Labour Emancipation League to

---

[1] Dadson to Lane, 10 December 1883, Add. MSS. 46435, fos. 44-45. Dadson, one of the more obscure members of the Federation, evidently worked for The Municipal Review and Local Government Record ("the organ of Members and Officials of Municipal Corporations and all other Local Governing Bodies"), as he wrote to Lane on its stationery. He was a frequent speaker for the Manhood Suffrage League, which he had addressed in 1882 as "the proposed Radical labor candidate for Marylebone," advocating "the Cause of the People" (National Reformer, 30 April 1882). An advertisement in the Radical (6 May 1882) identifies him as having been also a regular Land Nationalisation Society lecturer.

the committee planning George's reception on his arrival from America.[1]

Perhaps an even more direct predecessor of Lane's Labour Emancipation League than the Homerton club was the Stratford Dialectical and Radical Club. From its foundation in 1880 this was "not an ordinary workmen's political club"[2] but one of the most revolutionary-minded groups in metropolitan clubland, a nursery of advanced social and political opinion where socialist ideas of all types were welcomed -- although it soon showed a tendency to favour the anti-centralist varieties. It took part in the foundation of the Federation and was one of the few initial affiliates to stay steadfastly with it through the early eighties as it shed its more moderate radicals and then moved toward socialism.

Lane was closely involved in the Stratford Club's activities, but does not seem to have been so much a dominant figure as in the Homerton club. The principal leaders were Tom S. Lemon and Lane's friend Ambrose Barker, who had jointly headed a breakaway group in the Stratford branch of Bradlaugh's National Secular Society which left the NSS in November 1880 to start the Radical Club. Lemon, a well-traveled former seaman and labour organizer, now landlord of the "Telegraph" in Leyton Road, Stratford (where the new club met) was its president; soon he also became prominent in the Democratic Federation, and was on its first socialist executive in 1883. Barker, the club's secretary, was a young teacher at a Leyton Board School. He had been raised in the Chartist tradition in Northamptonshire — Bradlaugh's loyal political base

---

1 R. P. B. Frost to Lane, 31 (?) December 1883, Add. MSS. 46345, Fos. 46-7.

2 Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, p. 50.

during his conflict with Parliament in the eighties — and had joined both the NSS's "Hall of Science" and its Stratford branch on first coming to London in 1878.[1]

Actually there were signs of the discontent which led to the 1880 split in the Stratford NSS branch as early as the beginning of 1878, when there was talk in the branch of forming a separate club for the advocacy of "advanced political opinions." In the same year, socialism was favourably discussed at the branch — although this was probably Owenite socialism as the lecturer, Jesse Cocks (a popular Atheist speaker on the London workingmen's club circuit) was an Owenite.[2] According to Barker, the split came as the result of the breakaway group's insistence upon the "urgent necessity" of paying more attention to social questions instead of confining themselves to anti-theological propaganda.[3] Another and more immediate cause of the split was probably the growing disenchantment of the radical Left with Bradlaugh which began when he failed to live up to ultra-radical expectations after his

---

1 Lee and Archbold, loc. cit.; Barker, reminiscences in Freedom, May, 1931; Shipley, Club Life, pp. 36-7, 40-41, 45.

2 Shipley, Club Life, pp. 40-41.

3 Barker, MS. autobiography "Reminiscences of a Revolutionist," quoted ibid., p. 40.

initial election to Parliament in 1880.[1]

The important point about the origins of the Stratford Dialectical and Radical Club, however, is that it was a direct product of a working-class secularism that became too enthusiastically involved in positive political and social action to remain within the bounds of a creed that began to seem too narrow and negative. The Stratford club foreshadowed the importance the secularist movement would soon assume as a recruiting ground for new socialist converts. The club's early transition from secularism to socialism was a notable precursor of the long-term trend, described in Paul Thompson's study of grass-roots London politics, toward the gradual decline of secularist radicalism and its replacement by socialism as the "typical creed of the politically active working-class"[2] — a trend which also, of course, involved many young middle-class rebels against the existing system who came into the socialist movement in the eighties.

---

1 This is exemplified by the Radical's constant sniping at Bradlaugh (see Chapt. IV above, pp. 128-30, and the National Reformer, 11 December 1881 and 16 April 1882, for examples of the accusations against Bradlaugh of failing to support the Anti-Coercion movement and toadying to the Liberal Ministry and Bradlaugh's replies to these charges). Despite the hostility between Bradlaugh and the ultra-radicals, however, most of them (including the Democratic Federation, with which he had a relationship of mutual hostility from the beginning) strongly supported his fight against exclusion from Parliament as an atheist, for they saw this not only as a violation of voters' rights but a dangerous precedent which might be used against future working-class representatives: see the National Reformer, 31 July and 7 August 1881; 26 February, 5 March and 26 March 1882.

2 P. Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour (1967), p. 110. For the relationship between secularism and working-class radicalism, and the transition from secularism to socialism, see also Shipley, Club Life, pp. 30-41.

From the time of the Stratford breakaway from Bradlaugh and secularism, Ambrose Barker considered himself a revolutionary socialist, and as secretary of the Radical Club put before it the most revolutionary speakers he could find, such as Kropotkin, Marie LeCompte, Kitz, the Murray brothers, and other advanced men belonging to the MSL, the Democratic Federation, the English Section and the exiles' groups -- including, of course, Joseph Lane.[1] During 1881, and evidently on Lane's initiative, the club added regular open-air meetings on Mile End Waste (then known as "the outdoor forum of East London") to its existing programme of Sunday evening lectures and Wednesday science classes. It was through these meetings that Lane organized the Labour Emancipation League, which soon claimed branches at Mile End, Canning Town, Hoxton, Bethnal Green and several other East London districts.[2] Lane's energy and his devotion to his cause, to say nothing of his talent for stretching scarce funds, is obvious from Harry Lee's description of his organizing methods:

> When Lane got a group of sympathizers together with a fair prospect of their being able to keep going, he would secure a cheap meeting place for them, and put down a quarter's rent for it in advance, so that the new group might have a secure run for three months. He did this out of his wages as an ordinary carman, which at that time would probably be nearer 20 s. than 30s. a week.[3]

---

1 Barker in Freedom, May, 1931; Shipley, Club Life, p. 40.

2 Barker, loc. cit.; Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, p. 50.

3 Lee and Archbold, loc. cit.

The LEL, which carried on a vigorous propaganda in the streets as well as meeting places like Mile End Waste and Clerkenwell Green, served like its predecessors the Homerton and Stratford clubs as a kind of "halfway house, in which the theories of the old guard and the new pioneers both found expression,"[1] but it moved a step closer toward a definite commitment to the new socialist vision. It proclaimed as its object "a free Social Condition of Society, based upon the principle of Political Equality with Equal Social Advantages for All." The first six points of its nine-point programme[2] did not go beyond the usual democratic demands of the Chartist and Radical tradition; the seventh called for nationalization of the land, mines and means of transit in terms familiar to ultra-radicals since Bronterre O'Brien's day. But the final two points, although vague as to political and economic organization, amount to an avowal of basic socialist concepts which preceded that of the Democratic Federation by about a year and a half.

These statements are worth quoting verbatim, for only their exact language can convey the sense of old and new ideas mixing together, of the new socialist position on its point of emergence from traditional radical anti-monopolism — probably without any conscious distinction being made by the rank-and-file workingmen in the LEL who subscribed to them:

> 8) As Labour is the foundation of all Wealth ... the Regulation of Production must belong to Society, and the Wealth produced be equitably shared by All.

---

1 E. P. Thompson, William Morris, p. 331.

2 Given in full in Ibid., p. 331, n. 4.

> 9) As at present the Instruments of Labour and the Means of Employment are monopolised by the Capitalist Classes, which Monopoly is the cause of the misery and servitude of the Working People, the Emancipation of Labour requires the transformation of the said Instruments of Production and the Means of Employment into Collective or Public Property, for the benefit of All Members of Society.[1]

While Lane and the LEL were putting these propositions before the workers of East London, ultra-radical propaganda was taking on a similarly socialist colouration in Marylebone. So far Marylebone ultra-radicalism has been mentioned here only in passing — e.g., in the quotation of Frank Kitz's remark about the English Section having carried its propaganda "from Marylebone in the West to Stratford in the East." In Marylebone the pattern of the emergence of socialist ideas was much the same as in Soho and the East End, and many of the same people (notably including Joseph Lane and Edwin Dunn) were responsible. In Marylebone, however, the Marxist exiles of the "German Club" had somewhat more influence as compared with Lassalleans and anarchist-communists than elsewhere, for it was in Tottenham Street, Marylebone, that they established themselves after seceding from the Rose Street Club.[2]

At about the same time, the beginning of 1880, Lane and Dunn took the lead in starting a new branch of the Marylebone Radical Reform Association. This new "Branch No. 3," which met at the "Black Horse" in Marylebone High Street, with Dunn as secretary and Lane as "financial

---

1 Ibid., pp. 331-2.

2 See p. 199 above, note 1.

secretary," soon proved to be more advanced than the parent body: by April 1880 it had seceded over the issue of support for Bradlaugh's new Land Law Reform League (Bradlaugh's group was far too tame for the No. 3 Branch, stopping as it did well short of land nationalization) and set itself up as an independent "Marylebone Radical Association," dropping the word "Reform," with its connotations of moderation.[1]

Although Lane and Dunn themselves seem to have soon shifted the bulk of their activities toward East London, the group at the "Black Horse" was apparently the chief forerunner of a more important body, the Marylebone Central Democratic Association. This society was formed about the same time as the Democratic Federation by an amalgamation of some of the Marxist exiles who frequented the so-called "German Club," most notably Adam Weiler and C. J. Garcia, with a group of indigenous radicals -- including the young tailor James Macdonald, later a prominent Federation member -- who wanted a "more advanced" programme than the embryonic Federation seemed to promise under Hyndman's leadership.[2] When the Federation committed itself to socialism, however, the Marylebone association came over to it "in a body," and by the autumn of 1883 ranked as its "strongest branch in London."[3]

Long before this formal connection, however, the two groups seem to have been closely allied. The first reports of the Marylebone group's meetings at "The New Inn," Tottenham Court Road, show a

---

1 Shipley, Club Life, p. 84. For the Bradlaugh organization and the "Land Law Reform Convention" which initiated it, see Chapter IV, p. 111.

2 James Macdonald in How I Became a Socialist (Macdonald's account is more fully summarized in the introduction to Chapter III above).

3 Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, p. 55.

preponderance of Federation members giving the lectures — e.g., James Murray speaking on "The Dignity and Destiny of Man"; Dr. G. B. Clark examining "Free vs. Fair Trade"; and H. W. Rowland, the Cab Drivers' secretary, reporting on the 1881 TUC.[1] When it elected officers at the beginning of 1883, while it was still an independent body, three of the four chosen — Herbert Burrows, Charles Murray and Rowland — were prominent members of the Federation.[2] The fourth, C. J. Garcia, re-elected secretary, may or may not have belonged to the Federation, but he was certainly a socialist and evidently a Marxist, judging from the articles he began contributing regularly to George Standring's Republican from October 1882 and his position as London correspondent for the German Sozialdemokrat.[3]

Of the four London districts described earlier as the main centres of ultra-radical propaganda with a spreading socialist tinge in the early eighties, only Southwark has not yet been further touched upon. Some indication of the contribution to the nascent socialist movement from this area has already been given, however, in the section

---

1 National Reformer, 11 September, 18 September and 9 October 1881.

2 Republican, February, 1883.

3 Ibid., October, 1882. See, e.g., Garcia's first Republican article, "The Real Road Before Us," which argued against a utopian colonial scheme advocated the previous month by a writer signing himself "A Social Republican." Garcia here sets forth the main principles of a "Universal Social Republic" under the "supreme direction and control of the wealth-producing classes." The piece has the air of a European Marxist attempting to couch his views in language that would be familiar to English radical workingmen.

in Chapter IV above on the Radical, whose editors, Francis W. Soutter and Samuel Bennett, were prominent Southwark radicals moving toward socialism.

Southwark was also headquarters for the energetic Helen Taylor, an important figure on the radical Left of whom little has been said so far. As land nationalizer, secularist, socialist, women's rights advocate, champion of the Irish cause, proponent of independent labour representation, ubiquitous radical-club lecturer, militant School Board member for Southwark and the first woman to stand for Parliament (in 1885; at filing time her nomination papers and fee were refused by the Returning Officer), Taylor seemed to be in the forefront of every advanced movement going. Few other middle-class reformers were so actively involved in grass-roots working-class politics in the 1870s and 80s or so well-known and respected in the artisan world of the metropolitan radical clubs. No one associated with the Anti-Coercion and "New Party" movements and the foundation of the Democratic Federation (in which Taylor took a leading part from the outset until mid-1884, when she withdrew after a set-to with Hyndman) was more outspokenly opposed to Gladstone and the Liberals, nor a stronger supporter of working-class political independence.[1]

---

[1] In a letter to the editor of the Echo in the autumn of 1881, Taylor disclaimed having called Gladstone "a hoary-headed old humbug" — not, however, because this wasn't what she thought of him. "He may be one," she continued, "but I do not like the alliteration ... I did call him a dastard and a recreant and believe that half England would echo those words if polled." (draft dated 17 October 1881, Helen Taylor Correspondence, Mill-Taylor Collection, LSE, Vol. XVIII). Taylor was equally critical of Bradlaugh, believing that he had deserted the Anti-Coercion cause before his expulsion from Parliament in the hope of currying favour with the Liberal leaders (National Reformer, 16 April '82).

Helen Taylor's opinions have been described as "advancedly radical on all subjects."[1] She seems to have started from the standpoint of her mentor Mill and moved forward — or leftward, in more modern terminology — from there. As far as socialism is concerned, the exact nature of her theory — if indeed she was ever committed to any definitive theory — remains obscure. In any case, her emphasis in speaking and writing was on specific issues and concrete reform proposals, and she seems to have paid little attention to theoretical questions.[2] But she most certainly considered herself a socialist, and claimed to have been one from an early date — evidently some few years before Hyndman's conversion.[3]

Whatever Taylor's exact position, she undoubtedly took a strong interest in socialism from the later seventies if not earlier: from the mid-seventies she was a strong supporter of Soutter and his Southwark Radical Club, which backed independent working-class candidates such as George Odger and George Shipton in opposition to the Liberals from 1869 onward (and which canvassed for Taylor in her successful School Board candidatures of 1876, 1979 and 1882[4]); she was preparing

---

1 "Helen Taylor," DNB, Second Supp., III, pp. 483-5.

2 Contrary to the impression given by the DNB article, which, however, seems accurate in other respects.

3 At the time of her 1884 break with Hyndman, she accused him of conduct unbecoming anyone worthy to be called a socialist; attacking him as "only half a socialist," she claimed to have been "longer a socialist" than he had (draft reply to Hyndman's letter of 25 July 1884, both of which are in Mill-Taylor Coll., Vol. XVIII).

4 She retired from the School Board in 1885 owing to declining health.

a lecture on "Socialism" for the club as early as the autumn of 1878[1]; she edited Mill's unfinished "Chapters on Socialism" for posthumous publication in the Fortnightly Review in 1879[2]; and during and after her association with the Federation she consistently advocated the same kind of political and social reforms it urged as "Stepping Stones" to socialism.[3]

More will be said of Helen Taylor in the following chapter, with particular reference to her connection with the Federation and to the continuity of ideas in the transition from radicalism to socialism which she exemplified. Here, however, it should suffice to say that although she publicly proclaimed herself a socialist on several occasions[4] and was given to militant rhetoric, Taylor may not have been a true socialist in any strict theoretical sense. Her approach was non-doctrinaire and gradualist, essentially in the utilitarian tradition to which she belonged. But if her socialism was neither that of a Hyndman

---

1 F. W. Soutter to Taylor, 17 November 1878 (Mill-Taylor Coll., Vol. XVIII), which refers to her "promised address on 'Socialism'."

2 These articles, discussed in Chapter II above — in which Mill predicted that socialism would become the dominant issue in British working-class politics when the workers came fully to realize their electoral strength, but stopped short of endorsing any more than a limited application of socialist ideas — were the ones referred to by William Morris in his oft-quoted "How I Became a Socialist" account as a primary influence toward his own 1883 conversion: Morris felt Mill had "given his verdict against the evidence" that he had painstakingly set forth in these drafts for a projected book.

3 Compare the list of what Taylor called "practical measures wanted to bring comfort and competence to working people" in her 1885 election platform (see handbill "To the Electors of North Camberwell," dated 16 November 1885, Mill-Taylor Coll., Box VII, Item 66) with the programme of "palliatives" for immediate action pending the arrival of full socialism which was recommended by the Federation from 1883 (for a summary of the latter see Chapter VIII below, pp. 300-302.

4 See, e.g., the meeting reports columns of Justice, 2 February and 5 April 1884.

nor of a Joseph Lane, Helen Taylor nonetheless contributed a great deal to setting the new movement on foot through her intensive activity in grass-roots popular radical politics: a contribution which, like that of many of the more obscure figures who operated in this milieu, has been very little recognized.[1]

The approach of the Southwark Radical Club to the pressing political and social issues of the early eighties was much like that of its close associate Helen Taylor -- uncompromisingly militant and "advanced" on every radical question, rigorously independent of the major parties and politicians, dedicated to bettering the social and economic position of working people; but essentially utilitarian and non-theoretical (except perhaps on the land question) and predominantly concerned with immediate issues and specific reforms. The club's views as reflected in the Radical (which was to a large extent its organ) might fairly be described as "socialistic" in many respects, although not definitively socialist.[2] Unlike some of the other clubs which have been discussed here, it did not become a socialist organization -- although its most prominent member, its secretary F. W. Soutter, belonged to the Democratic Federation from the outset and seems to have

---

1 Considering her prominence in a remarkable range of "advanced" causes, Taylor has had little attention from historians, perhaps because she has been overshadowed by her famous stepfather Mill and because she agitated more by the spoken than the written word. The Mill-Taylor Collection, together with the newspaper coverage of her activities, might provide the basis for a worthwhile special study of Taylor; but unfortunately, the collection has less on her specifically socialist activities than on anything else she was interested in; one looks in vain for any firm guidance as to her theoretical position on socialism.

2 See the discussion on this point in Chapter IV above, pp. 134-141.

become a socialist by early 1884 if not earlier.[1] Nevertheless the club must be considered a major contributor to the new radical ferment of the early eighties -- particularly in regard to the Irish Coercion, land nationalization and labour representation issues -- and it was one of the chief centres of the "New Party" revolt against Liberalism which served as the opening wedge for the starting of an effective socialist propaganda.

Harry Quelch, the long-time Justice editor and a leading working-class member of the Federation, gives strong support to this view in recalling his own association with Soutter and the Southwark Radical Club for his article in the Justice "How I Became a Socialist" series (1894-96).[2] Quelch, who joined the club in 1876 (he was then eighteen

---

1 Soutter's Federation membership and at least temporary conversion to socialism apparently have not been recognized by previous writers who have mentioned him briefly in connection with the Radical. Reports in Justice (16 February and 1 March 1884) on a series of debates on socialism at the Southwark Radical Club, and another Justice account (17 May 1884) leave no doubt that he was, and considered himself, a socialist at this time, although his socialism seems to have been of a practical and gradualist type, and that there was a diversity of opinion for and against socialism in the club as a whole. There is also some indication that Sam Bennett regarded himself as a socialist by 1885, when he sought Taylor's help in raising funds for a prospective parliamentary candidacy (Bennett to Taylor, 18 October 1885, Mill-Taylor Coll., Vol. XVIII, Fos. 1-2).

2 The articles in this irregular series are the same as those published in the undated SDF pamphlet How I Became a Socialist, which may be seen at LSE. Quelch's article (see pp. 70-78) is summarized in considerable detail in the following pages because it offers one of the best personal accounts available of the way in which the influences it describes were leading young radicals toward socialism -- that is, it illustrates in personal terms and in reference to a specific locality the kind of radical-to-socialist transition with which this thesis is specially concerned.

years old and a Southwark resident)[1] dropped out for a time because of his dislike for its pro-Russian stance on the Eastern Question, but rejoined in 1880. Through his association with the club, and particularly with Soutter, whom he credits with having "brought me into the ranks of the socialist movement,"[2] Quelch began a kind of "political education" that was common to many of the young radicals who helped to build the new movement.

Quelch described the club as having been in the later seventies already a centre of disaffection with Liberalism and of strong belief in the principle of labour representation — despite temporary ad hoc

---

1 How I Became a Socialist, p. 72. According to Quelch, the club had just been formed about this time by "the local friends of the late George Odger." Soutter's reminiscences, however, (see Chapter IV above, pp. 131-32) indicate that at least the nucleus of the club must have existed from 1869, when Soutter and other Southwark radical workingmen backed Odger's independent campaign as a "labour" candidate for Parliament.

2 How I Became a Socialist, p. 73.

alliances with the Liberals to make common cause against the Tories.[1] "At that time," Quelch recalled, the hostility between the Liberal party and radicals like Odger and his followers in the Southwark Radical Club "was quite as pronounced as that today" -- i.e., the mid-nineties -- "between Liberals and Social-Democrats." As for Soutter, he, in particular, was anathema to Liberal politicians, "no more loved by the Liberals of that day than the most bitter Social-Democrat is loved by them to-day."[2]

---

1 For detailed contemporary evidence of the strength of the club in Southwark politics, as well as confirmation of the picture given here of its early independence and advanced viewpoint, see the following items in the South London Press: "The Representation of Southwark," 31 January 1880; "Political Parties in Southwark" and "Southwark Election," 7 February 1880; "The Southwark Election: the Week's Meetings," 14 February 1880; and the issues of 28 February and 6 March 1880, page 9 in both cases. These items are mostly concerned with George Shipton's candidacy in the Southwark by-election of February, which was sponsored by the Radical Club and Helen Taylor. For the influence of the large Irish electorate in Southwark, see "Representation of Southwark," 7 February 1880; and for addresses later that year at the Radical Club by Professor E. S. Beesly and T. P. O'Connor, MP, which clearly reflect the club's main interests and attitudes, see the issues of 17 April and 18 September. Shipton, who campaigned as the inheritor of the Odger tradition, was at this time secretary of a small trade society of housepainters, president of the Cabdrivers' Society and secretary of the London Trades Council. His platform included land nationalization and "Home Rule pure and simple" as well as abolition of the House of Lords and any other measures necessary for setting "employer and workingman on terms of perfect equality" in the House of Commons. He told a Bermondsey meeting that this was the only sure way of resolving "the vexed questions of Capital and Labour," but said that Englishmen "would not shrink from revolution if starvation stared them in the face." (South London Press, 14 February 1880).

2 How I Became a Socialist, p. 73.

After the Liberals were returned to power in the General Election of 1880, which gave Gladstone "the largest majority that any Minister had had in recent times," Harry Quelch's "political education" began in earnest. Quelch described himself as having become "an extreme Radical" by this time, but "not at all a Socialist." Unlike socialists of whatever variety, young Quelch in 1880 "still believed that there was a career open to anyone with energy and determination to achieve it, and that only unjust political institutions and privileges stood in the way."[1] Before continuing with Quelch's account of the way in which subsequent events altered his thinking, it would be well to look briefly at his personal background.

By 1880 the self-educated Quelch, newly married and about to become a father, was a packer in a wholesale paper warehouse in Cannon Street, a job he would continue to hold through his early years in the Democratic Federation, before he became full-time editor of Justice on a small salary. Quelch had been born in 1858 in the village of Hungerford, Berks.; his father and his grandfather having been blacksmiths; his mother the daughter of an agricultural labourer. He went to work at ten after his father became an invalid, first for an upholsterer and then with a dairyman and cattle-dealer. Leaving home for London at 14, he worked initially at a tanyard and an iron foundry before[2] settling into the warehouse job. According to Quelch's own account,

---

1 Ibid., p. 74.

2 For these and further biographical details, see the introduction by E. Belfort Bax in Quelch, Literary Remains (1914), a posthumous edition of short stories and articles Quelch wrote for Justice.

his childhood had been "one of extreme poverty ... softened by the kindness of as loving parents as ever lived," from whom he had inherited "a considerable stock of piety, a somewhat rebellious spirit, and the belief that, under Providence, each was the arbiter of his own destinies; and success in life, although not so important a matter as the kingdom of God ... was yet to be achieved by individual effort."[1] In this early background of poverty, piety and sturdy individualism, as well as in his political background, Quelch was typical of many of the working-class elite who helped shape British socialism in the eighties and nineties.

Responding to the cry that "the great thing for all sections of reformers to do was to sink all minor differences and turn out the Tories," and also having freshly in mind the by-election defeat of their candidate Shipton, the Southwark Radical Club "made common cause with their erstwhile enemies of the Liberal Party" for the duration of the 1880 general election campaign.[2] In spite of Quelch's dislike of Gladstone and his pro-Russian foreign policy (on this particular question Quelch was untypical of most radical workingmen), he joined with the club in supporting the Liberals:

---

1 How I Became a Socialist, p. 71.

2 Ibid., p. 74. The members evidently made this decision only after some consideration, however, for when they first met to prepare for the general election they planned to choose a candidate of their own once again and back him "at all costs." At the same time, it may be noted, they discussed establishing a metropolitan journal of their own to be called the "Radical," which of course was in fact done after the suitable gestation period of another nine months: see South London Press, 28 February 1880, p. 9.

> The Tories helped. They declared that the return of the Liberals meant the overthrow of the Crown, the Church, and the Constitution...I did not believe the Liberals were nearly as revolutionary as the Tories alleged, but if they only did half what the latter declared they would do much good would be accomplished, many barriers to progress overthrown. On their side the Liberals promised peace abroad and reforms at home; justice to Ireland, and enfranchisement for the workers in the other parts of the kingdom. The Radicals worked with a will, the country went strongly against the Government; in Southwark the two Tories were replaced with two advanced Liberals, and Gladstone was returned triumphantly to power...[1]

But before many months had passed, the new Liberal Government began to demonstrate -- at least as far as Quelch, the Southwark Radical Club and the rest of the London radical Left were concerned -- the "worthlessness of Liberal promises." The process of disillusionment and rethinking which led to the "New Party" revolt and thence to the quickening of interest in socialist ideas was now under way:

> For justice to Ireland we had the worst Coercion Act of modern times...an Act which deprived Ireland of all political rights, put her under martial law, and sent a thousand of her sons and daughters to gaol without any sort of trial whatever. For peace abroad we had the iniquitous Bondholders' war against the revolted Egyptian people; for reform at home we had police espionage, the Grahamising of private letters, the curtailment of the right of asylum, interference with the liberty of the Press, suppression of public meetings, and the prosecution of Johan Most...at the dictation of Bismarck, for justification in a German paper of the execution of Alexander of Russia.[2]

---

[1] How I Became a Socialist, p. 74.

[2] Ibid., pp. 74-5.

Such a catalogue of sins against democratic principles by the supposed party of progress -- particularly Irish Coercion, the first and most grievous offence in ultra-radical eyes -- was enough to drive "many of the more sturdy Radicals" into revolt, although others "contented themselves with saying that it must be all right as Gladstone, Bright and Chamberlain were at the head." The first concrete manifestations of the revolt came in the autumn of 1880 with the formation of the Anti-Coercion Association, on the initiative of the Southwark Radical Club and many of the other societies and individuals which have been discussed here, and the subsequent appearance of the Radical. Its editors, Soutter and Sam Bennett, became co-secretaries of the Association, and when Quelch saw that his friend Soutter was so prominently involved in the new agitation, he too threw himself into it, at the same time formally rejoining the Radical Club.[1]

Hyndman, who had only recently become active in the milieu of popular radical politics, was also involved in the Anti-Coercion movement; it was at one of the Association's public meetings that Quelch first met him. Like so many other radical workingmen, Quelch was

---

[1] Ibid., p. 75. For a full account of reactions to coercion in the different sections of British radicalism, see T. W. Heyck, The Dimensions of British Radicalism: the Case of Ireland 1874-95 (Urbana, Chicago and London, 1974), pp. 53-81. Heyck's findings that "it was in working-class radicalism that opposition to coercion was most intense" (p. 66) and that the anti-coercion agitation "contributed strongly to that increase in working-class consciousness so evident in the late nineteenth century" (p. 81) tend to confirm both Harry Quelch's account and other evidence (see esp. Chapter IV above and Chapter VII below) indicating that the radical revolt against Liberal coercion in Ireland was a major catalytic factor in the beginnings of the modern socialist movement.

initially wary, "not favourably impressed by his aristocratic manner and style of dress." Quelch had "always had a prejudice, a wholesome one, as I think, against well-to-do upper middle-class people coming into a democratic movement, their influence being calculated to weaken and emasculate the movement." But Hyndman, he concluded on observing him further, was different. As early as their second meeting, when Quelch came along with Soutter to Hyndman's home to discuss an upcoming Newcastle by-election, Hyndman's "evident disinterestedness and sincerity" caused Quelch to considerably modify his initial prejudice.[1]

Subsequently, as Quelch recalled, his political education "proceeded apace," entering a new phase during the period in which the Democratic Federation was founded and began its work. With Soutter, the Radical, Henry George, Hyndman, and ultimately Karl Marx as his tutors (as was the case with others, but with uncommon effort and deliberation), Quelch now began the more intensive process of study, discussion, observation and rethinking which completed his transformation from individualist to socialist:

> I, who had hitherto always sneered at the crude and utopian theories of the poor, ignorant, foreign Socialists...as I believed them...whom I often heard discussed, and occasionally met, began to see that there were other things which were wrong besides political institutions.[2]

Quelch "became a land nationalizer intuitively," entered into long discussions with his friend Soutter on "co-operation and other

---

[1] How I Became a Socialist, pp. 75-6.

[2] Ibid., p. 76.

means of social salvation" and joined a co-operative society. He read the Radical, and was led thence to George's Progress and Poverty, the "first book of the kind" he had read, which greatly impressed him but left him unconvinced of the adequacy of George's analysis. He "sent in his adhesion" and joined the Federation as soon as it was formed, although he did not attend its meetings at first and evidently remained more or less a "silent member" until the beginning of 1883. But Soutter, Quelch recalled, was on the Federation's first executive, and Hyndman soon appeared at the Southwark Radical Club, where Quelch heard him lecture on "Labour and Capital":

> In the discussion which took place I sided with him, because he seemed to me to have the right hang of it, although a good deal of what he said was quite new and strange to me. That was the first time I heard the name of Karl Marx. Hyndman quoted him several times. I had read Hyndman's 'England for All' and determined to tackle the 'Capital,' which, I learned, was regarded as the Bible of the Continental Socialists. I bought a copy of the French edition... there was then no English translation... at Trubner's and set to work to master it. Marx is not easy reading, even in English, but in a language with which I was very imperfectly acquainted it was no child's play. However, I managed to grind through it, and with that and my practical experiences of everyday life, in which I constantly saw illustrations of the fallacy of my early faiths, in the frequent failure of the best and success of the worst, I think I may say my conversion to Socialism was completed.[1]

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 76-7. Bax, in his introduction to Quelch, Literary Remains, notes that in addition to teaching himself French in order to read Capital, Quelch studied historical works including Gibbon's Decline and Fall, and later taught himself German and some Latin.

In the next chapter the focus will return to the Democratic Federation and its movement as an organization toward socialism. But before the present discussion of the London ultra-radical milieu in general is concluded, some reference should be made to a manifesto issued somewhat later than the period so far covered in detail -- actually July 1883, the same month in which the Federation's first open declaration for socialism appeared. This document, issued jointly by a number of foreign and native left-wing groups including the Federation and others discussed above, was entitled "A Manifesto to the Working Men of the World, issued by the Social Democratic Associations in London." It represents a little-known effort by Continental exiles and British workingmen to revive the old IWMA, or at least the method and spirit of it.[1] The manifesto is significant in the present context both as an example of the continuity of the IWMA tradition on the London radical Left, and as an indicator of the extent to which British ultra-radicals had moved beyond their actual position in the days of the "International" toward a definite revolutionary-socialist ideology.

Having defined the social ideal as "a new order of society in which everyone should produce according to his ability and consume according to his necessities," the manifesto concludes:

---

[1] The manifesto, which is described briefly (and mistitled "Manifesto to the World") in Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, p.53, was discovered by Chimen Abramsky and reproduced in Bulletin No. 14 of the Society for the Study of Labour History (Spring 1967).

> In order to conquer in this struggle of Labour against Capital we have to unite ourselves, we have to strengthen the bonds of fraternal solidarity which bind us together. We have to continue the work of the International Association of Working Men. Therefore comrades we appeal to you once more in the famous call 'Working Men of all Countries Unite' to overthrow the present competitive state of society and establish a new one upon Equality, Liberty and Justice.

The organizations subscribing to the manifesto included, besides the Federation, the Marxist "German Club," which now claimed several branches; an "International Club" with English, French, Dutch, "Slavonic" and Polish sections;[1] the Labour Emancipation League, Stratford Radical Club, Homerton Socialist Club and Manhood Suffrage League; and two other native groups not discussed above, the Patriotic Club and the Chelsea Labour Association. Among the individual signers were a number whose names are by now familiar to the reader, including Joseph Lane (for the Homerton club), Charles Murray (for the MSL), James F. Murray and Richard D. Butler (for the Federation) and H. W. Rowland (for the Chelsea group). The manifesto, then, obviously spoke for a considerable cross-section of the milieu in which the Democratic Federation operated in its first years. It shows that many lesser groups outside the Federation, but partially sharing its membership and in a good position to influence it (note that all those just named were influential in the Federation) had come to a socialist standpoint by the time the Federation did;

---

1 Probably the same as the Rose Street Club, but perhaps, since the address is different, a branch of it; one of the signers for the "English Section" was John Lord, in 1881 a leading member of the Rose Street English Section.

and it serves as one more indication that the contribution of ultra-radical workingmen to the emergence of the new British socialism in the early 1880s was more considerable than many previous accounts, concentrating on the better-known-middle-class socialist converts, have suggested.

The New Socialism: A "Middle-Class Movement" Only?

The well-known and well-studied leaders of the new socialism have themselves often failed to give due recognition either to the role of working-class ultra-radicals[1] and their organizations in building the movement in its earliest years, or to the continuing strong influence of their tradition as distinct from the parallel but separate literary-artistic-intellectual tradition of social revolt. Either because these leaders were not always fully aware of all that was going on in the artisan world of the radical clubs (particularly in the years before they came into contact with it), or because they came to define what constituted socialism very narrowly, some of the most prominent figures among them, such as Engels, Belfort Bax or Hyndman made many comments about the beginnings of the movement which have left the impression of a generation of unrelieved apathy before the rise of socialism, which was rather suddenly imposed by middle-class intellectuals upon unwilling and uninformed working-class comrades.

In the frequently-cited letters of Engels, for instance, there are a number of remarks ascribing the 1883 emergence of the Democratic

---

[1] "Working-class" must be recognized as an oversimplified label for these grass-roots agitators. Although most of them were workers -- usually artisans -- or came from a working-class background, the general category also includes such middle-class figures as Helen Taylor who were part of the milieu of the workingmen's radical clubs and participated in it on its own terms.

Federation as an avowed socialist body to the pressure of a "dominant element" of "young educated bourgeoisie" who, "to the disgrace of the English workers it must be said, understand things better and take them up more enthusiastically than the workers themselves."[1] Belfort Bax stated in his reminiscences that "the Socialism of the eighties and even the early nineties — i.e., the new scientific Socialism of Marx and all that that implied — was mainly a middle-class movement ... the work of education in the new social and economic views was mainly done by middle-class men."[2] Hyndman, too, even while citing the contribution of the Chartist tradition to the new socialism and praising some of the surviving Chartists he knew personally, contributed to the "generation of apathy" picture of working-class politics before and during the rise of socialism by saying (in an 1883 pamphlet) that from 1848 onward working-class "political agitation has been almost at a standstill."[3]

Such statements as these by well-known late-Victorian socialists, which may be found in both contemporary and reminiscence sources, are by no means entirely untrue — especially if we remember that their authors often tended to regard any viewpoint falling short of fully-developed revolutionary socialism — and Marxian socialism, not any other form — as evidence of apathy or ignorance. It is not denied here that the new socialism of the eighties, which did not really emerge as a nationally significant movement until the transformation of the Democratic Federation into the Social-Democratic Federation, was a "middle-class

---

1 Engels to A. Bebel, 30 August 1883 and 18 January 1884, in Marx and Engels on Britain (Moscow, 1953), pp. 516-517.

2 E. Belfort Bax, Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Mid and Late Victorian (1918), pp. 71-2.

3 Hyndman, The Coming Revolution in England, p. 14.

movement" in two important senses: when Hyndman, Morris, Bax, H. H. Champion and other middle-class men of great energy and determination became committed to Marxism (or at least to their own interpretation of Marx), they made this transformation more rapid and certain than it could have been otherwise. These men also had the time, the financial means, the contacts and the fluency of pen which enabled them to gain far wider publicity for the socialist message than their working-class comrades, largely lacking these assets, could ever have achieved by themselves.

Nevertheless, the view of the new socialism as a "middle-class movement" arising in a context of working-class apathy or hostility toward socialist ideas — still common although recent work in labour history has much modified the "apathy" picture of the post-Chartist generation — seems inadequate, if not inaccurate, in view of the evidence so far examined here.[1] The development of a generally socialist (though

---

[1] The most recent, and perhaps the most extreme, expression of the "middle-class movement" view to date may be found in Willard Wolfe, From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889 (New Haven and London, 1975). Although recognizing that the Democratic Federation retained at least a "residual" working-class following after the loss of most of the radical clubs initially affiliated with it, Wolfe seems to count among this following only the group most closely associated with Helen Taylor (pp. 76-77), and in any case he asserts (citing the same comments of Engels that are quoted above) that working-class members of the Federation had virtually no part at all in shaping its policies or ideology — that, indeed, their "only role ... was one of vigorous opposition to the 'Marxist' ideology that was adopted for them by the middle-class leadership" (p. 303). This view (which the present writer cannot accept) perhaps stems largely from Wolfe's primarily intellectual-history orientation; his treatment of the early development of the Federation (pp. 67-109), is based mainly on the writings of Hyndman, Bax, Champion, Morris and other middle-class leaders, and is most useful for its detailed analysis of their economic ideas in comparison with those of prominent radical theorists from Ricardo to J. S. Mill and Henry George. Although Wolfe gives little recognition to the contribution from grass-roots leaders bred in the working-class ultra-radical tradition, he convincingly makes the general point that in many ways the Federation's brand of Marxism followed "traditional Radical lines" more closely than Marx (pp. 96-98).

not always Marxist) viewpoint and even the beginnings of an organized socialist propaganda seem to have been already in progress on the London radical Left, under the leadership of grass-roots agitators now largely forgotten, before most of the best-known architects of the new movement had appeared on the scene. Studies focusing on these more famous figures, and on later stages of the movement than dealt with here, have not fully taken into account the important groundwork laid by largely working-class ultra-radicals who combined socialist concepts with the principles inherited from their own democratic and egalitarian tradition. These agitators -- even those who did not become socialists in any strict ideological sense of the term -- had in many cases been ardent social revolutionaries for years. As such they reinforced the new movement as it emerged, and -- as will be more fully shown in the next chapter -- impressed upon the SDF and British socialism generally many of the characteristic features of the older tradition of the metropolitan radical artisan.

From its beginnings onward, as one authority on London left-wing politics has observed, the Federation drew heavily for the rank-and-file of its membership on "the same kind of working men who formed the backbone of London radicalism."[1] Both from inside and outside the Federation, a nucleus made up mostly of such men — ubiquitous propagandists, members of a radical working-class elite in constant contact with each other as advocates of similar ideas, participants in the same agitations, lecturers before the same audiences and leaders of a complex of overlapping groups within the popular radical milieu of which the Federation was then an integral part — worked with a will toward the same ends its more famous leaders had in view.

---

[1]Paul Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour, pp. 115-116.

CHAPTER VII

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE FEDERATION I: MOVING LEFTWARD, 1881-2

Even in the first months of its organizational life in the summer and autumn of 1881, the Democratic Federation showed little promise of becoming the broadly-based "New Party" of independent radicals that its founders had in mind. Right from the beginning it found itself at odds with much of its prospective constituency of radical workingmen and others on the political Left, and it quickly showed the characteristics of prickly independence (some would say rigidity) and reluctance to compromise which would mark its later career as a socialist body.

Many of the metropolitan radical clubs did initially affiliate with the Federation, and it received firm public affirmations of support from a few ultra-radical groups,[1] such as the Manhood Suffrage League and the Magna Charta Association.[2] But many potential supporters, both of the extreme Left and more moderate radical circles, seemed not at all favourably impressed by the new organization. Their suspicion of Hyndman's motives has been noted in earlier chapters; Engels' attitude was typical of many of the European exiles and the native ultra-radicals associated with them. As late as the spring of 1882, he was advising his comrades on the Continent that as far as the progress of socialism in Britain was concerned, the Democratic Federation was "of no account

---

1 National Reformer, 26 June 1881.

2 Pall Mall Gazette, 8 September 1881.

whatever," primarily because it was led by "an ambitious candidate for Parliament named Hyndman, an ex-Conservative who can get together a big meeting only with the help of the Irish and for specifically Irish purposes."[1] Even the Magna Chartists, although they felt that the initial programme of the Federation was "very similar" to their own demands and passed a "vote of confidence" in the organization at a "crowded meeting" in Bishopsgate after an address by Hyndman, did "not yet seem quite prepared to accept Mr. Hyndman as their leader" in place of the much-admired Joseph Cowen who had withdrawn. A member of the Magna Chartists' executive council told a reporter at this September 1881 meeting that "'they wanted an English as well as an Irish Parnell,' and nominated Mr. Cowen for the vacant post of 'leader of the English people.'"[2]

Not surprisingly, both Tory and Liberal newspapers spoke scornfully of the "new party" and its prospects, when they spoke of it at all: The sarcasm of the Pall Mall Gazette's comment (in the report just quoted) that the Federation had "at last received a genuine accession of strength in the patronage which has been graciously extended to it by the Magna Charta Association" was typical. But the radical press, too (with the notable exception of the Radical) was generally unfriendly or indifferent. Not only after the Federation veered toward socialism, but right from the outset, some of the most hostile comment on it came from papers like the Weekly Dispatch or Bradlaugh's National Reformer whose readers might have been expected to support much of its initial non-Socialist programme.

---

1 Engels to E. Bernstein, 3 May 1882, reprinted in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels on Britain (Moscow, 1953), pp. 513-14.

2 Pall Mall Gazette, 8 September 1881.

The Dispatch, for instance, ranks as a fairly "advanced" paper, with views that often coincided to a considerable extent with those of the Federation in the 1881-2 period. It had been highly critical of the Gladstone Government, especially in regard to Ireland and the coercion policy, during the months when the Federation was being formed, and — after a spell of mildness following the introduction of Gladstone's Irish Land Bill — by mid-1882 it was chafing openly at Whig domination of the Government and accusing the Ministerial radicals, Bright, Dilke and Chamberlain, of not having been "staunch to their principles" since becoming "official personages."[1] In June of that year, during the aftermath of the Phoenix Park murders, it stood with the Federation and the ultra-radical Left in condemning the Government's new Coercion Bill as "obnoxious."[2] Nevertheless, from the time it published J. Morrison Davidson's derogatory report on the Federation's June 1881 founding conference[3] the Dispatch rarely mentioned the organization again except to belittle it as a silly and insignificant body and attack Hyndman, like Davidson had attacked him, as a "Jingo."[4]

---

1 Weekly Dispatch, 23 July 1882.

2 Ibid., 18 June 1882.

3 See Chapter V above, pp. 176-7.

4 See, e.g., the Dispatch's unfavourable 30 October 1881 report on the Federation's Hyde Park demonstration a week earlier to protest the imprisonment of Parnell, and a number of scornful references to the Federation in the "Waifs and Strays" political gossip column (24 September 1882, 22 October 1882 and 4 March 1883).

The fledgling Federation fared no better at the hands of Charles Bradlaugh and his National Reformer.[1] From references in the paper's "Rough Notes" column, it appears that the Federation made a number of efforts during the summer of 1881 to persuade branches of Bradlaugh's National Secular Society to affiliate with it. Evidently displeased that the founders of the Federation had been, as he put it, "careful not to invite any of the prominent members of the Executive of the NSS to the original meetings," Bradlaugh discouraged such affiliations, at first claiming that he knew nothing of the Federation and its objects.[2] The Federation obligingly sent a copy of its programme to the National Reformer immediately. Bradlaugh approved much of it, but criticized the demands for nationalization of the land and abolition of the House of Lords as impractical, and sniffed that except for Herbert Burrows and Helen Taylor (probably the best-known secularist advocates amongst the original Federation members) there were "hardly any well-known, and certainly ... no influential, democratic names included in the list of the Executive Committee."[3] Soon after this pronouncement the National Reformer printed a brief, unfavourable notice of Hyndman's England for All, objecting to it principally on the ground that Hyndman wanted "too much done by the State."[4]

The Federation and some of its principal affiliates, such as the Manhood Suffrage League and the Stratford Radical and Dialectic Club,

---

1 See esp. the issues of 4, 11 and 18 September 1881.

2 National Reformer, 4 September 1881.

3 Ibid., 18 September 1881.

4 Ibid., 2 October 1881.

had meanwhile joined in the widespread radical protest against Bradlaugh's exclusion from the House of Commons, and continued to support his cause despite his hostility.[1] However, there is little reason to doubt that the Federation championed Bradlaugh's cause for the sake of the principle involved -- maintaining the right of electors to choose whomever they liked, including future working-class representatives who might also be faced with "exclusion" if Bradlaugh's removal were allowed to stand as a precedent -- and not out of any desire to rescue the parliamentary career of Bradlaugh himself. The disillusionment with Bradlaugh which began to be felt on the ultra-radical Left about this time has already been briefly mentioned.[2] This was shared by many in the Federation, who particularly disliked his opposition to land nationalization and his attitude toward Ireland and coercion.

Bradlaugh did not exactly "vote steadily for coercion" before his expulsion from Parliament, as Helen Taylor and Henry George accused him of doing.[3] But even by his own account, Bradlaugh's opposition to coercion was only lukewarm: He voted against the so-called "Peace

---

1 For a typical report of a public meeting in Clerkenwell convened by the Federation and chaired by Hyndman, which resolved unanimously in favour of abolishing the Oath and admitting Bradlaugh immediately, see the Weekly Dispatch, 21 August 1881; for reports of two conferences of "London Workmen's Clubs" in support of Bradlaugh's right to his seat as a duly elected representative, and of the Tower Hamlets radical club unanimously carrying a resolution moved by Herbert Burrows condemning the exclusion of Bradlaugh as "subversive of the constitutional rights of all voters," see the National Reformer, 26 February, 5 March and 26 March 1882.

2 See Chapter VI above, p. 221.

3 The quotation is from a New York Irish World article by George, reporting Helen Taylor's refusal to urge Irish MP's to support Bradlaugh's readmission, which was reprinted in the National Reformer, 16 April 1882. George wholeheartedly agreed with Taylor's position.

Preservation Bill," but supported the Government on the Arms Bill, the other major coercion measure.[1] Although Bradlaugh was at pains to point out that he considered coercion "a bad and sad business ... utterly fruitless save of mischief," he, on the other hand, felt "only contempt" for the Irish Land League[2] — a position guaranteed to raise the hackles of ultra-radicals inside and outside the Federation. Herbert Burrows, though he took a prominent part in the campaign against Bradlaugh's exclusion, perhaps best expressed the attitude of "the real Radical ranks" (including, of course, most of the leaders of the Federation) in an article concluding that Bradlaugh had "failed in his duty" as an advocate of democracy from the beginning of the anti-coercion movement in December 1880. Burrows also felt that there were "some grounds" for the radical suspicion that Bradlaugh had been afraid to offend the Liberal leaders by opposing them too vigorously on coercion.[3]

Whether or not this suspicion was justified, it seems clear that from the earliest days of the Federation the mutual hostility existed that would lead ultimately to the well-known public debate on socialism between Bradlaugh and Hyndman in 1884 — one of the major landmarks in the parting of the ways between radicalism and the new socialism. At first, however, the principal issue which began to separate the Federation from Bradlaugh and from much of the main stream of British radicalism was the Irish Question. On Ireland the Federation was more consistently militant than anyone except for the Irish themselves and a few

---

1 National Reformer, loc. cit.

2 Ibid., 19 March 1882.

3 Radical, 25 March 1882.

of the most revolutionary-minded groups on the radical Left, and it persisted in its condemnation of the Gladstone Government's Irish policy long after the initial radical dismay over coercion had begun to taper off. The reaction of most of the metropolitan radical clubs showed clearly enough (as even the perennially optimistic Hyndman was eventually compelled to admit) that "the times ... were much less revolutionary than they looked."[1]

The Preoccupation with Ireland, 1881-2

During the Democratic Federation's first year, as Hyndman recalled in his memoirs, "the Irish Question overshadowed all others" with which the new organization was concerned.[2] Its first official action was to send a deputation of inquiry to Ireland at the invitation of the Land League,[3] and the deputation's report seems to have been its first publication. Its leader joined the Land League and became a prominent member of the executive of the League's new British arm, the Land League of Great Britain.[4] In the spring of 1882, he singled out the Liberal Government's "career of brutal tyranny" in Ireland as having been not only the main "impetus to the formation of the Federation," but still "the

---

1 H. M. Hyndman, The Record of an Adventurous Life (1911), p. 258. Hyndman ruefully concluded that it was the "strictly limited fanaticism" of Parnell which had most "precisely suited" the 1880s.

2 Ibid., p. 255.

3 The report, published 2 August 1881 as a 19-page pamphlet entitled The Condition of Ireland, was signed by Dr. G. B. Clark, J. Finlay Finlayson and William Saunders, all prominent land nationalizers. A copy is available at the British Library of Political and Economic Science.

4 Hyndman, Record, loc. cit.

principle cause of its existence."[1]

The connection between the Federation's early preoccupation with Ireland and its later adoption of socialism is not an obvious and direct one, but Ireland was nonetheless a crucial factor in its development. Through its persistent defense of the Irish revolt and condemnation of the Liberals' handling of it, the Federation soon aligned itself with the most militant section of London radicalism -- the section of the O'Brienites, the exiles and the young native revolutionists like Joseph Lane or Frank Kitz in which a nascent socialist movement was already taking form. Inevitably in taking this course the Federation quickly lost much of its original membership, the mainstream radicals in traditionally Liberal-oriented clubs which would not permanently turn away from the party of Gladstone and Chamberlain. Divested of these relative moderates, the Federation became not a party but a small sect of ultra-radicals which could more easily be led toward socialism by the activist core of its members who were moving in that direction and attracting others of like mind.

These ultra-radicals, who in the 1881-2 period were broadening their attack on the "privileged classes" to specifically include capitalists as well as landlords, seemed to consider the Liberal Party virtually identical with the capitalist class; hence they spoke of Liberal policy toward Ireland as a capitalist policy and blamed the acquiescence of most Liberal-aligned radical clubs and trade unions in coercion on their being under the control of capitalist interests. Hyndman was clearly taking

---

1 "The English Democratic Party: Mr. Hyndman interviewed by Mr. George," Radical, 1 April 1882 (Reprinted from the New York Irish World).

this line in speaking for the Federation by the spring of 1882. In the interview by Henry George already referred to, he pointed especially to Chamberlain as the arch-manipulator, "above all things a capitalist," who was controlling working-class politics through the NLF "machine" in the interests of his own class. Identifying the Irish cause with the general interest of the working classes throughout the United Kingdom, as the ultra-radicals had been doing since the beginning of the current Irish crisis,[1] Hyndman issued a blanket condemnation of "middle class" Liberal politicians as having "no intention of permitting the working classes to gain their proper share in the government and to carry out the measures which alone will end the domination of the many by the few."[2]

The process by which the Federation moved rapidly away from mainstream radicalism and toward the ultra-radical Left seems to have begun with the report of the deputation sent to Ireland immediately after its foundation. The report, although milder than the Federation's later statements on Ireland — it was relatively sober in tone, made no specific recommendations and did not attack Gladstone or other Liberal leaders by name — nevertheless clearly condemned the motivation and the results of Liberal policy by its conclusion that "There was and is no anarchy in Ireland ... the Coercion Acts were wanted and were introduced solely for the purpose of collecting unjust rents."[3] The deputation

---

1 A typical example of ultra-radical pleas for Anglo-Irish unity is J. Morrison Davidson's letter to the Weekly Dispatch (9 October 1881) asserting that the Irish cause and that of "the English Democracy" were "identical," and describing the Irish as "fighting in the van of the Grand Army of Democracy for the inseparable dual — Land and Liberty."

2 Radical, 1 April 1882.

3 Democratic Federation, The Condition of Ireland, p. 17.

had found the Land League far more effective than Dublin Castle in relieving agrarian distress and preserving, rather than destroying, public order; they had been impressed not by the amount of violence in Ireland but by the extent of "forbearance under official provocation."[1]

After their return from Ireland, the deputation (which evidently included Hyndman and a number of others besides the three signers of the report[2]) set to work writing and lecturing on the "horrible sufferings of the Irish peasantry" and the "shameful oppression of the landlords."[3] The Radical -- as might be expected of the organ of the Anti-Coercion Association -- gave the Federation high marks for the "good work" done by the deputation and ventured that while the Federation had "made a mistake" initially in formulating a set programme, it had since "made up for this by devoting itself to practical work."[4] But "the meat offered was too strong for the weak stomach" of some radical clubs, which refused to hear the Federation speakers.[5]

If the report of the deputation and the club lectures based upon it were "strong meat," the Federation's next major pronouncement on Ireland, the so-called "Tyrone Manifesto," was positive poison to all but the most decidedly advanced and anti-Liberal English radicals. In

---

1 Ibid.

2 Hyndman, Record, p. 255.

3 Social-Democratic Federation, John E. Williams and the Early History of the SDF (1886), pp. 4-5; Justice, 9 August 1884. Typical of these lectures was one entitled "Ireland as I saw it" given by A. F. Winks, a workingman member of the deputation, to an audience of Leicester secularists. Winks' talk was described as a "graphic" personal account of the "wretched condition" of the country.

4 Radical, 16 July and 24 September 1881.

5 J. E. Williams and the Early History of the SDF, loc. cit.

September 1881 a bye-election was held in County Tyrone for which the Rev. Harold Rylett, an Englishman, was put forward in opposition to the Liberal as the candidate of the Land League "on behalf of their patriotic countrymen then imprisoned."[1] The Federation actively supported Rylett's effort "to make a fight against Liberal Coercion and in favour of Home Rule," and as a result learned to its dismay, as Hyndman put it, "what a feeble set"[2] most of the English radicals were.

The Federation's manifesto on the Tyrone election not only urged all Irish voters to support Rylett's candidacy, but denounced Gladstone and the Ministerial radicals in the most vehement terms possible, claiming that the support of men like Bright, Chamberlain and Forster for the "tyranny" of the Coercion Acts was motivated by their desire to stay in office and that their behaviour displayed "the hollowness and hypocrisy of capitalist radicalism ... in all their revolting meanness."[3] Hyndman, both at the time and later, professed to be surprised that the radical clubs affiliated to the Federation had not "fully sympathized" with this position.[4] But such an attack on men who were, after all, still heroes to many radical workingmen, was bound to provoke a strong reaction.

One significant factor in this reassertion of loyalty to Gladstone and the Ministerial radicals, no doubt, was the passage of the Irish Land Act during the summer of 1881. Although the advanced men of the Radical

---

1 Justice, 9 August 1884.

2 Hyndman, Record, p. 293.

3 Tyrone Manifesto, quoted in Justice, 9 August 1884.

4 Hyndman, Record, p. 295; Radical, 1 April 1882.

considered the measure woefully inadequate,[1] more moderate circles were favourably impressed by it. As the approval of the Act by the Weekly Dispatch indicates, it did much to take the steam out of the radical revolt against the Liberals which had been at its height when the Federation was being organized, and it made the Federation's accusations of "hypocrisy" and "tyranny" sound all the more extreme. When the results of the Tyrone election were in, the Dispatch exulted in the defeat of Rylett and described the vote as an "unexpected ... complete and triumphant vindication" of the Land Act; the ministerial candidate had beaten a "popular Tory" despite the presence of the Land League candidate in the field to draw off Liberal votes.[2]

Just before the election the Federation had held a London meeting of delegates from its affiliated radical clubs at which the "Tyrone Manifesto" was issued. The reaction of most of the clubs is well illustrated by the angry letters which soon peppered the columns of the Dispatch. The president of the Commonwealth Club, Bethnal Green, which claimed a "bona-fide membership of 500 working men," wrote that his members had "absolute confidence ... in the present Government" and regarded Mr. Gladstone "with a loving reverence." Nor, he added, were they "of opinion that Joseph Chamberlain is a coward," as stated at the meeting; they protested "indignantly" at "Mr. Hyndman's Federation" arrogating to itself "the right of speaking in our name" and called on all the Federation's affiliates to protest its attacks on Gladstone and Chamberlain and "at once withdraw from this bogus society of crotchet

---

1 Radical, 11 June 1881.

2 Weekly Dispatch, 18 September 1881.

mongers." Other letters in the same issue, from the Borough of Hackney Workmen's Club ("over one thousand members ... the largest in London") and the Tower Hamlets Radical Club expressed similar indignation and voiced the suspicion that the Federation was secretly working in the Tory interest.[1] In the following issues more clubs registered their repudiation of the Federation, including the famed Eleusis Club of Chelsea, the Westminster Democratic Club and the Cobden Working Man's Club, whose secretary described its members as viewing "with disgust the reckless and irreverent policy of Mr. Hyndman and his followers."[2]

Hyndman, writing to Helen Taylor that "the fight has begun"; blamed the desertion of the radical clubs on "Liberal wire-pullers, specially paid for that purpose" who were "at work taking the clubs from us."[3] But he was also forced to recognize the genuine strength of what he called the "Gladstonian fetish-worship" among the majority of radical workingmen.[4] Although puzzled by this -- since he himself and, presumably, all who still remained in the Federation after the "Tyrone Manifesto" debacle, believed Gladstone was "really the incarnation of the bourgeois policy that has dominated England for the last fifty years" -- Hyndman felt it was based on Gladstone's great eloquence and energy and the widespread belief that he was "more radical than he really is."[5]

---

1 Ibid., 25 September 1881.

2 Ibid., 2 October 1881.

3 Hyndman to Taylor, 2 October 1881, Mill-Taylor Collection, LSE, Vol. XVIII.

4 Hyndman to Taylor, 9 January 1883, Ibid.

5 Radical, 1 April 1882.

In any case, within a few months of its foundation, the prospective "new party" had been reduced, virtually at a stroke, to the small hard-core of its most uncompromisingly anti-Gladstone, anti-Liberal members. These were evidently not, however, simply a "middle-class group largely deprived of the support of working men" as Hyndman's biographer has described them.[1] It would be more accurate to say they were a body of militant ultra-radicals of all classes; and in fact many of the Federation's remaining supporters seem to have belonged to predominantly working-class groups like the Stratford Radical and Dialectic Club or the Manhood Suffrage League.[2] The one newspaper which praised the Tyrone Manifesto and continued to encourage and publicize the Federation was the little Radical, certainly a workingman's paper; it complained that the Federation was being unjustly "abused" for issuing a document which "contained some very plain truths respecting Messrs. Gladstone and Chamberlain."[3] Hyndman, in the letter to Helen Taylor on the aftermath of the Tyrone debacle which was quoted above, singled out the Chartist veterans of the MSL for special praise for their support. Noting that "such attacks as are now being made ... serve to show us who are on our side" in earnest, he reported that "Charles Murray and all the old '48 men are heartily with us. They have queer ideas on the currency and

---

1 Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism, Oxford, 1961, p. 47.

2 Several middle-class members who had been instrumental in founding the Federation, such as Helen Taylor, Herbert Burrows, and Dr. G. B. Clark, remained prominent leaders in it for some time after the "Tyrone Manifesto" — permanently in Burrows' case — but many of the best-known middle-class leaders, e.g. William Morris, Belfort Bax, H. H. Champion, J. L. Joynes and R. P. B. Frost, had not yet joined.

3 Radical, 1 October 1881.

are fanatical on one or two points. But they are honest and energetic which are the main things."[1] Other groups such as the Marylebone Central Democratic Association, the Southwark Radical Club, and the Magna Charta Association, which (like the MSL and the Stratford Club) had been mainstays of the Anti-Coercion movement and had fairly close connections with the Federation, also shared its views on Ireland and seem to have remained on friendly terms with it.[2] The Federation still had its Irish supporters, too, of course, although Hyndman felt it could "fully rely" upon them only if they "could shake off their religionism a little," which he still trusted would happen.[3]

Hyndman, characteristically taking an optimistic line, seemed little discouraged by the Federation's severely weakened numerical strength. On the contrary, he told Helen Taylor that if only the remaining members could stay together and keep "our principles and our programme, ... including ... free education and free justice before the

---

1 A reading of the weekly notices of MSL activities in the club columns of the National Reformer leaves no doubt of the MSL's continuing strong support of the Federation and close relationship to it; but as Hyndman's comments suggest, the MSL maintained its separate identity and kept on promoting the particular doctrines of Bronterre O'Brien, including his ideas on currency reform, throughout the 1880s. James Murray's lecture to the Rose Street Club's English Section on 4 September 1881, "An Honest Currency the Want of the Age" was one of many on this theme, and reflects the MSL's unabated concern with some of the leading ultra-radical causes of an earlier day.

2 Charles J. Garcia, in a letter to the Radical (8 April 1882), names these and several other clubs as prominent participants in the Anti-Coercion Association. Although Garcia complained on this occasion that their members had felt "slighted and insulted" by Hyndman's statement about the lack of radical support for the anti-coercion movement in the interview published in the previous week's Radical, it will be remembered that the Marylebone group, of which Garcia was secretary, became one of the Federation's principal affiliates in 1883 (see Chapter VI above, pp. 226-7.

3 Hyndman to Taylor, 20 October 1881, loc. cit.

metropolis and the country," they should succeed in "forming indeed a definite and uncompromising party of the people." The indications are that Hyndman's own militance had significantly increased and his commitment to the Federation and "the movement" had become markedly firmer during the months since the organization's founding -- although it should be noted that he did not yet speak specifically of a socialist movement. "For my own part," his letter to Taylor continues, "I have thrown in my lot with the Federation finally. For social boycotting or personal obloquy I care nothing (ditto Mrs. Hyndman)." Criticizing Dr. G. B. Clark, who evidently had counseled that the Federation moderate its attacks on the Liberal leaders in order to keep the support of the less extreme radicals who had by now withdrawn, Hyndman insisted that the only hope for working people was to "nail the 'no compromise' flag to the mast." To him "the very bitterness of the Liberals ... and capitalist Radicals" proved that "the movement has begun" and that they felt "the ground trembling beneath them."[1] Thirty years later, although the real revolutionary earthquake was not yet at hand, Hyndman could still look back on the Tyrone Manifesto and the flight of the radical clubs as an important early milestone for the Federation. At the time, he recalled, "we all of us regretted this," but it was "really the best thing that could have happened, and hastened our development towards clear-cut definite socialism."[2]

Although some who remained in the Federation after the Tyrone Manifesto may have felt, like Dr. Clark, that it was unwise to alienate

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Hyndman, Record, p. 275.

the followers of Gladstone and Chamberlain completely, the organization now seemed to be firmly set on the "no compromise" course favoured by Hyndman. For the time being this was expressed mainly through its continued militance on Irish issues, which remained the principal focus of its activity through the rest of 1881 and well into 1882.

On the 13th of October 1881, shortly after the arrest and imprisonment of Parnell, a special meeting of the executive council was held. The meeting resolved that the Federation should call upon "all Democratic organizations" in the country to hold "indignation meetings" in an effort to arouse the English public to a sense of the "shameful injustice" being done by the Government in their name. For its own part, the Federation planned a public protest on Clerkenwell Green for the following Sunday.[1] This was quickly followed by a major Hyde Park meeting on October 23, organized in conjunction with the Land League of Great Britain, at which the Irish were urged to refuse payment of rent.[2] This must have been one of the largest public meetings of the Federation's early years, as the Weekly Dispatch — which was by no means friendly to the Federation at this time — estimated the crowd at 50,000.[3]

---

1 Radical, 15 October 1881.

2 Hyndman, who as noted earlier, was on the executive of the Land League of Great Britain, claimed a large share of the credit for this body's endorsement of the "No Rent" manifesto even though Parnell — "not a 'No Rent' man by any means" -- had objected to it. Hyndman believed the manifesto speeded Parnell's release from Kilmainham by convincing the Government that "he alone could keep the advanced movement from becoming formidable." (Record, pp. 257-8).

3 Weekly Dispatch, 30 October 1881. The paper asserted, however, that the crowd was mostly Irish, unlike those at anti-coercion meetings of the previous spring, and that "not more than one in eight meant business."

At the end of 1881 the Federation succeeded in establishing its first provincial branch. Probably it was no accident that it was located in Liverpool,[1] a city with a large Irish population. In any case, when the official foundation meeting of the branch was held in January 1882, the struggle of Ireland was again the main theme of the proceedings. "Ireland," said Helen Taylor, the principal speaker at the meeting, was "that noble and heroic nation which was leading the way and showing them how to win freedom ... The brave stand taken by the people of Ireland was an encouragement to Democracy in every part of the world."[2] At the second public meeting held by the new branch, working-class political independence was advocated, but less for its own sake than as a means of protest against Liberal support for coercion: One of the main reasons working people were urged to "bring out their own candidates" seemed to be to "punish those who had been unfaithful to their professions at the hustings" regarding Ireland.[3]

A few months later the issue of "Liberal coercion" in Ireland was once again brought to the forefront of public attention. The Phoenix Park murders in Dublin on 6 May 1882 "caused a wave of public horror and indignation throughout Britain which nothing could check."[4] This quickly found expression in a new Coercion Bill proposing even stronger measures than those of the previous year, which was brought in immediately by the

---

1 Radical, 24 December 1881.

2 Ibid., 21 January 1882. According to this report, the open-air meeting drew an audience of "over 2,000," but this no doubt reflects the personal popularity of Taylor more than the actual strength of interest in the Federation.

3 Ibid., 11 February 1882.

4 Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, p. 46.

Government. The Federation, urging working-class solidarity in defense of democratic freedoms, now issued an uncompromising manifesto which condemned the Liberals for being "false to every principle of freedom" and attempting to establish in Ireland "a despotism worse than anything known in these islands since the days of the infamous Star Chamber." Calling a demonstration in Hyde Park for the 11th of June to protest "the shameful continued action of the governing classes," the Federation asked "the workers of London" to show "by meeting in thousands ... that they have neither part nor lot in this tyranny."[1] The demonstration was evidently a successful one, at least in terms of attendance; according to the Weekly Dispatch it took the form of a procession led by Federation members of "various metropolitan districts" with "banners, devices and bands of music" from Trafalgar Square to the park, where a crowd of "many thousands" had assembled.[2] The meeting, which was addressed from six platforms, carried by acclamation a resolution which condemned the new Coercion Bill in particular and "the tyrannical policy of the Liberal Government toward Ireland" in general.[3] Most of the banners

---

1 Handbill announcing the demonstration, reprinted in full, ibid.

2 Weekly Dispatch, 18 June 1882. Although it pointed out that despite the event's billing as an English demonstration it included " a large contingent of Irishmen," the Dispatch's tone in this report seemed friendlier toward the Federation than usual -- perhaps because the Dispatch also condemned the new coercion bill; its leader in this issue called the measure "obnoxious."

3 Ibid.; Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, p. 47. One of the speakers was Joseph Cowen, who according to the Radical (24 June 1882) was the only "Respectable," and the only MP, to turn up at the meeting. This seems to have been the only occasion when Cowen took part in a Federation activity after his withdrawal from the organization during its founding stage.

carried radical mottoes or statistics on evictions in Ireland, but one at least bore a message which seems to herald the Federation's later development: "Labour Makes Capital: Capital Robs it."[1]

By the time this meeting was held, the Democratic Federation -- now a year old, much more homogeneous in membership although much smaller than at the beginning, and now definitely identified with the ultra-radical Left -- was already moving beyond the stage of being preoccupied mainly with Ireland and the coercion issue. Now that only those who were "definitely antagonistic to Gladstone and all his political works" were left in the Federation, it was broadening the scope of its agitation in an effort to work out some more "positive policy and programme on which to appeal to the mass of the people."[2] For the time being the resurgent land nationalization movement, newly inspired by the charismatic Henry George, seemed to offer the best possibilities for large-scale social reform.

Enter Henry George: The Federation and the Land Question

Henry George and his soon-to-be famous work Progress and Poverty were still almost unknown in Britain on the 28th of May 1881 when the Radical, in a leader entitled "Malthusianism Demolished," published what amounted to a rave review of the book and hailed its author as "the leading Radical economist of the age." The leader writer -- almost

---

1 Lee and Archbold, loc. cit.

2 Ibid., p. 48; see also John E. Williams and the Early History of the SDF, p. 7.

certainly William Webster[1] — said he had been led to obtain Progress and Poverty through reviewing George's more recently-published pamphlet The Irish Land Question, and that he had read it "with the startling surprise and pleasure of a positive revelation": New assaults were being made upon the established political economy "from some quarter or other, almost every month," but this work was one "which we must at once unhesitatingly pronounce to be the ablest and most thoroughly Radical economic work that has ever appeared in English." Extravagant praise, no doubt, but Webster was right on the mark in predicting that Progress and Poverty "only requires to be known to receive an immediate and widespread welcome in Great Britain and Ireland."

On October 25, George arrived in Ireland to investigate conditions firsthand as correspondent for the New York Irish World.[2] He could hardly have come at a more opportune time for the promotion of his land-reform theories in the British Isles. Parnell had just been imprisoned; the Land League's revolt was at its height and its "No Rent" manifesto (which, as noted above, was energetically supported by the Democratic Federation) had just been issued. Largely through the efforts of the Radical, Progress and Poverty had begun to attract the attention of British radicals, and A. R. Wallace's Land Nationalization Society was already at work in the cause of social salvation through land reform.

---

1 According to J. Morrison Davidson, a fellow-Scot and close friend, Webster was known as "the discoverer of Henry George"; he was the author of the series of expository articles on Progress and Poverty which began with this issue of the Radical. (Davidson, The Annals of Toil, p. 393).

2 E. P. Lawrence, Henry George in the British Isles (East Lansing, Michigan, 1957), p. 15.

It was also about this time that the Federation began to campaign actively for nationalization of the land over the whole of the British Isles, a topic which gradually displaced the coercion issue and the specifically Irish land question as the organization's leading concern. The Federation's first major public meeting in support of land nationalization was held in September 1881[1]; from this time onward -- no doubt partly because of the new interest in the subject aroused by George -- the Federation's lecturers on the radical club circuit made "the land for the people" an increasingly frequent theme.[2] Early in 1882 Dr. G. B. Clark published his "Plea for the Nationalization of the Land" lecture (which he had first given in 1869, the year the old Land and Labour League was founded) in pamphlet form,[3] and about the same time Hyndman published a new edition of Thomas Spence's "Newcastle Lecture" of 1775 under the title "The Nationalization of the Land in 1775 and 1882." In his preface Hyndman not only referred to the advocacy of land nationalisation by the Chartists and in the Communist Manifesto, but went beyond the land question in comparing the monopoly of land with the monopoly of financial and industrial capital and

---

1 Justice, 9 August 1884; Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, p. 45.

2 The club columns of the National Reformer clearly show the increasing interest of the Federation (and other groups) in the land question in late 1881 and 1882; see, e.g., reports of addresses by Hyndman on "Henry George's Work on Progress and Poverty" and "The Land for the People" (4 December 1881, 22 January 1882); by Herbert Burrows on "The Earth is the People's and the Fulness Thereof" (17 February 1882); by Dr. G. B. Clark on "A Plea for the Nationalisation of the Land" (5 March and 23 April 1882).

3 For a brief review see the National Reformer, 19 February 1882.

predicted a "furious social war" if both these monopolies could not be "peaceably broken up" by democratic means.[1]

It may be noted in this connection that although the Federation at this time was still not a Marxist organization, it was in its early emphasis on Ireland and the land question closely following Marx's own prescription for the beginning of the social revolution in Britain: In the late 1860s Marx had written that he had been "convinced from the first" that the revolution must start "from the ground up," with the "doom of landlordism — first in Ireland and then in England."[2] Marx considered it essential that the English working-class separate itself from ruling-class policy by making "common cause with the Irish" against English landlordism, because "the primary condition of emancipation here — the overthrow of the English landed oligarchy — remains impossible ... so long as it maintains its strongly entrenched outpost in Ireland."[3] In 1880 Marx thought the time might be at hand when an agrarian crisis, coming to a head "quite independently of the cycles of the commercial-industrial crises," would indeed precipitate such an overthrow and become the catalyst of revolution.[4]

Engels, writing a few years later when a definite socialist movement at least — although not a revolution — was finally emerging, thought it natural that Henry George should play a "meteoric role" in

---

1 Hyndman's preface is summarized, with excerpts, in E. Eldon Barry, Nationalisation in British Politics (1965), pp. 139-40. For a contemporary review of the book see the Radical, 18 March 1882.

2 Marx to L. Kugelmann, 6 April 1868, reprinted in Marx and Engels on Britain (Moscow, 1953), p. 499.

3 Marx to L. Kugelmann, 29 November 1869, ibid., p. 502.

4 Marx to N. F. Danielson, 12 September 1880, ibid., pp. 510-511.

the early stages of the movement because the land question in Britain was so important "traditionally, and also actually on account of the vast extent of big landed property."[1] Through both his speaking campaigns in Britain and the unprecedented success of Progress and Poverty, George created such a stir in the eighties that it is perhaps all too easy to overestimate his personal contribution to the new radical ferment and the rise of socialism. It must be kept in mind that his actual theories were nothing new to well-informed British radicals, whether working-class or middle-class, and in any case it was his fervent anti-landlordism more than the specifics of his "single-tax" programme that most impressed his audiences.[2] But George's superbly effective popularization of the basic idea that social ills could be cured by radical economic remedies was something new, and it came at a peculiarly opportune historical moment, just when "the terrible object-lesson of Ireland writhing in the remorseless grip of landlordism"[3] was at the centre of public attention and had already done much to kindle what one scholar has aptly called "the smouldering unease with narrow radicalism."[4]

---

1 Engels to A. Bebel, 18 January 1884, ibid., p. 517.

2 John Saville, "Henry George and the British Labour Movement," Science and Society (New York), Vol. XXIV (1960), pp. 321-2; Max Beer, History of British Socialism, Vol. II (1920), p. 243. Saville particularly, and justifiably, criticizes E. P. Lawrence's Henry George in the British Isles for giving George almost the entire credit for the rise of socialism and for showing little awareness of the "lively anti-landlord tradition" of British radicalism before George's day. The Lawrence book is valuable, however, for its detailed coverage of George's British campaigns and the contemporary comment on them. For the theoretical basis of George's land reform ideas and a discussion of earlier proponents of similar views, see Beer, pp. 237-241 and Peter d'Alroy Jones, The Christian Socialist Revival (Princeton, N. J., 1968), pp. 49-52.

3 Davidson, Annals of Toil, pp. 395-6.

4 Paul Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour: the Struggle for London (1967), p. 113.

Thus George, who flirted with socialism but never abandoned his faith in the free-enterprise system if only the encumbrance of land monopoly were removed, became one of the major catalysts in the emergence of a movement much more revolutionary than his own position.

George's real burst into the national limelight in Britain — and the beginning of the period of his strongest influence on British radicalism and nascent socialism — came in the late summer of 1882 with his harassment by the police in Ireland. George was tailed constantly and arrested twice — the first time with J. L. Joynes, an Eton master who was soon to become a prominent Democratic Federation member and socialist — in an evident effort to hamper his investigations of evictions and the workings of coercion.[1] Questions were raised by Irish members in the House of Commons, and George demanded and received a formal Government apology.[2] Up to this time he had been ignored by the press except for a few radical journals, but now papers like the Times and the St. James's Gazette printed articles giving serious attention to George's views and pronouncing him a force to be reckoned with.[3]

---

1 Joynes, who was engaged on his own investigation of Irish conditions, sought out George because he had been so impressed with Progress and Poverty. For a detailed and amusing account of his travels with George and the arrests, see Joynes' Adventures of a Tourist in Ireland (1882).

2 Lawrence, Henry George, p. 27.

3 The Times identified George closely with socialism, condemning his land scheme as "socialism in disguise" while warning that he represented "a party and a political force" (6 September 1882). It soon followed this with a lengthy review of Progress and Poverty (14 September 1882). The St. James's Gazette compared George with William Cobbett as a "half-mad demagogue" who "denied that there was any injustice in confiscating private rights" and seemed to fear that George, like Cobbett, might become the "most popular politician" of his day (27 September 1882).

By the time George sailed for New York on the 4th of October, 1882, ending his first visit to Britain, he had achieved public notoriety as a socialist and revolutionary, an "apostle of plunder" — a reputation which could only add to his popularity and influence on the radical Left. Just before leaving, George wrote to Helen Taylor that although the Irish Land League was now in the doldrums, sales of Progress and Poverty were booming; the first printing of the first cheap British edition had sold out almost immediately, and George was "convinced the movement has begun" in England and Scotland.[1] The adoption by the 1882 TUC of the land nationalization resolution put forward by H. W. Rowland, Cab Drivers' secretary and member of the Democratic Federation, seemed to be one concrete sign of this; Hyndman saw the passage of Rowland's resolution by a substantial majority "in spite of the efforts of the principle organizers of the Congress" as a hopeful sign of the awakening of the labour movement's rank and file.[2]

---

1 George to Taylor, 1 October 1882, Mill-Taylor Collection, Vol. XVII. The series of letters running from 1882 to 1897 which may be found here shows a continuing relationship of friendship and mutual respect between George and Taylor.

2 Hyndman, The Social Reconstruction of England (1883), p. 8. The TUC, however, did not again include land nationalization in its programme until 1887.

Although Hyndman thought little of George's intellectual abilities and dismissed his economic arguments as "glittering superficiality,"[1] he readily acknowledged that George's Progress and Poverty, with its "brilliant high-class journalese," exerted a powerful influence toward the growth of socialist ideas. In Hyndman's view it did this through a process of "teaching by error" in which George induced readers who might not otherwise have done so to think about the economic basis of social problems, and raised economic questions to which only socialism offered satisfactory answers.[2] Tom Mann's recollections of the effect of Progress and Poverty on his own development as a social reformer, while much more respectful toward George than Hyndman's comments, illustrates essentially this kind of process.

Mann's reaction to George's book may be taken as typical of the experience of many other idealistic, socially-concerned young workingmen who found themselves dissatisfied with individualist solutions to poverty and unemployment like private charity, temperance and Malthusianism and

---

1 Hyndman, Record, p. 281. Hyndman's view of George as an intellectual lightweight seems to stem from his failure to convert George to Marxian economics during George's month-long stay with the Hyndmans in 1882. George evidently was as stubborn in his views as his would-be teacher; if George were pressed too hard in argument, Hyndman claimed, "he only went off to some of his devoted single-tax worshippers, from whom he returned more single-taxy than ever." (Ibid., p. 291). George nevertheless remained on good terms with Hyndman and the Federation, at least until 1885, when the publication of a verbatim "dialogue" between George and Hyndman on "Socialism and Rent-Appropriation" (Nineteenth Century, Vol. XVII [February 1885] pp. 369-380) foreshadowed the parting of the ways between Georgeism and Socialism. Although the final break did not come until George openly repudiated socialism in 1887, this debate clearly reveals how much at odds George's economic views were with Hyndman's Marxism, or indeed any form of socialism.

2 Hyndman, Record, pp. 281-2.

were coming to the conviction that "something more far-reaching must be found." When Mann read Progress and Poverty in this "unsettled state of mind" in 1881, it immediately impressed him as "by far the most valuable book I had so far read." George's "capable and comprehensive analysis of the population question" convinced him that the real cause of poverty lay in the economic system and not in overpopulation. The book as a whole, he said,

> enabled me to see more clearly the vastness of the social problem, to realize that every country was confronted with it ... I could not accept all George's claims on behalf of his [Single-Tax] proposal ... I am not wishful, however, to pass any criticisms upon Henry George; I wish, rather, to express my indebtedness to him. His book was a fine stimulus to me, full of incentive to noble endeavour, imparting much valuable information ... and giving me what I wanted — a glorious hope for the future of humanity, a firm conviction that the social problem could and would be solved.[1]

As Mann's account suggests, it was George's ability to inspire his readers with hope and moral fervour, not his specific proposals, that fired their determination to change the existing order of things and thus, in Hyndman's words "greatly facilitated the promulgation" of Marx's far more revolutionary proposals.[2] Although Tom Mann, like others who looked back upon their discovery of Progress and Poverty as a major step toward socialism, did not immediately acquire from it "a real grasp of social economics" (Mann's own commitment to Socialism and joining of the Democratic Federation came in 1884), Mann felt that his study of George's book was of "untold value," for never afterward

---

1 Tom Mann, Memoirs (1967 ed.), pp. 14-17.

2 Hyndman, Record, p. 282.

did he have "one hour of doubt but that the destiny of the human race is assured, and that the workers will, in due time, come to occupy their rightful position."[1]

Besides George's sheer inspirational power over his readers and listeners — which was evidently considerable — there seem to be two main reasons for his rise to public prominence in Britain and his close connection with the Democratic Federation and the emergence of socialism: First there was the predominance of the land question in the thinking of even the most advanced radicals of the early eighties and, secondly, the confusion about George's real position which led to his being generally considered a socialist during this period.

John Rae, an acute contemporary observer and critic of the new socialism, succinctly explained the first factor in George's prominence when he wrote in 1884:

> The most active leaven of the present social movement ... is really the land question, the rapidly ripening conviction that our land system lies one way or another very near the root of many of our social evils ... that is the real meaning of the popularity of Mr. George. He met this movement as it was rising, and partly helped it up, partly rose with it.[2]

To understand why British radicals, mostly urbanites themselves, were so preoccupied with the land, we must keep in mind that when George was reaching the height of his influence the land question was considered

---

1 Mann, Memoirs, p. 17.

2 John Rae, "Social Philosophy," Contemporary Review, Vol. XLV (February 1884), p. 295.

just as much an urban as a rural question. The deepening scarcity of steady employment and decent housing for urban artisans was widely blamed on the competition of country people (including the Irish) driven into the towns by bad conditions in the countryside. If this decline of agricultural employment and drift of population into the towns could be reversed (and at the same time urban housing conditions improved) by ending the monopoly of land in both town and country by the comfortable classes, then both rural and urban workers would benefit.[1]

As for the confusion about George's real beliefs and his identification with socialism in the public mind, this was due partly to the general lack of distinction between radical and socialist viewpoints in the early eighties and partly to George's own apparent uncertainty about collectivist proposals beyond the single tax; he did not really begin to clearly distinguish his own proposals from those of the socialists and land nationalizers whose platforms he spoke from until 1886 and 87.[2] Because of George's tendency to be "all things to all discontented

---

[1] For the expression of this viewpoint by Alfred R. Wallace and the Land Nationalisation Society, see the Report of the Land Nationalisation Society for 1881-83 (p. 5) and 1883-4 (pp. 11-13). Henry George's theory of economic rent, which was based on Ricardian rent-theory, appealed strongly to urban artisans, as Gareth Stedman Jones has pointed out, because it "provided an arresting and convincing explanation of housing conditions in London" (Outcast London, Oxford, 1971, p. 284). The intensity of the concern of most radicals — not only land nationalizers, single-taxers, and socialists — with land reform by the mid-eighties is indicated by the way in which Chamberlain and his followers sought to make the "unifying emotionalism" of anti-landlord feeling the basis of their "unauthorized" Radical Programme for the 1885 general election: on this see ibid., pp. 224-5; J. L. Garvin, Life of Chamberlain, Vol. 1, P. 121; and D. H. Hamer, Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery, (Oxford 1972), pp. 102-104.

[2] P. d'A. Jones, Christian Socialist Revival, pp. 53-54; Lawrence, Henry George, pp. 52-55.

men,"[1] his championship of trade unionism and "municipal" socialism, and the fiery revolutionary tone of his moral indictment of the existing system,[2] the new socialists in the Democratic Federation hoped for several years that George would ultimately move beyond land reform to a fully socialist position.[3] Sometimes they seemed unaware how far George really was from socialism, as William Morris's mention of George and socialism in the same breath, as it were, in an 1883 letter seems to indicate. Morris, who had himself just become fully convinced that traditional radicalism would never lead to "real social changes" because it would "always be under the control of rich capitalists," pointed to the popularity of Progress and Poverty as evidence that working people were beginning to find this out for themselves: "It is certain," he wrote, "that Henry George's book has been received in this country and in America as a new Gospel. I believe that Socialism is advancing, and will advance more and more as education spreads, and ... I find my duty clear to do my best to further its advance."[4]

What Morris and other new socialist converts did not immediately realize is that George was not a semi-socialist; he was, like most British radicals at this time, an anti-monopolist who saw in land nationalization not the first step in the destruction of the existing economic system, but the one exception necessary to make the system

---

1 Lawrence, Henry George, p. 52.

2 P. d'A. Jones, loc. cit.

3 Hyndman, Record, pp. 291-2; see also H. H. Champion, "Henry George and the Land Question," Justice, 19 January 1884, and the review of George's book Social Problems in Justice, 9 February 1884.

4 Quoted in Beer, History of British Socialism, Vol. II, pp. 250-1.

work fairly. Reflecting the same basic outlook which, as pointed out earlier in this thesis, characterized even the most apparently "socialistic" sections of popular radicalism in the 1870s, George did not see any necessary conflict between the capitalist employer and the worker. He put both classes in the same camp as "producers" and regarded them as sharing a common interest opposed to that of the landowning class -- "non-producers" who lived on unearned rents.[1] The new socialist viewpoint, although still expressed in terms of a "producers" vs. "non-producers" dichotomy, was nevertheless fundamentally different because it took the capitalist out of the "producers" camp and lumped him together with the landlord as a similar kind of non-producing rentier. The new viewpoint was partly the result of new economic circumstances -- the growth of joint-stock companies and the increasing separation of capitalist owners from active management[2] -- and partly the result of the Marxian argument that industrial competition was leading to a concentration of industrial wealth and power that was analagous to the older monopoly of the hereditary "privileged classes" over the land. Thus anti-monopolism could, and did, lead logically to socialism for many of George's followers -- although it did not in the case of many others, including George himself.

---

[1] The ultra-radicals of the 1870s, however, did distinguish the capitalist as pure financier or "moneylord" from the industrial entrepreneur and did NOT regard the former as a producer: Attacks on the "moneylords" are frequent in ultra-radical papers of the early 1870s such as the Republican and the International Herald.

[2] This trend, which blurred the old distinction between profit and rent based on the idea that profit was earned and rent was unearned, is discussed in H. J. Perkin, "Land Reform and Class Conflict in Victorian Britain," The Victorians and Social Protest, ed. J. Butt and I. F. Clarke (Newton Abbot, Devon and Hamden, Connecticut, 1973), pp. 209-214.

The close relationship between the "Georgeist" land-reform movement and the emerging socialism of the Democratic Federation will be further touched upon below, particularly with reference to the foundation of the Land Reform Union (later called the English Land Restoration League) and its organ the Christian Socialist in 1883. However, to preserve a sense of chronology in describing the shifting emphases of the Federation's agitation, it seems appropriate at this point to examine its general position at the start of 1882 and see what changes seem to become evident during this year.

The Federation in 1882: An Unacknowledged Drift Toward Socialism

Throughout 1882 the Federation seems never to have openly identified itself with socialism, nor to have advocated any measure that clearly went beyond the bounds of militant radical anti-monopolism. Yet there seem to be strong hints of movement toward a definitely socialist outlook in some of the statements of the organization's position and expressions of the views of leading members which appeared in print during the year. In other words, from the tone and language of such statements -- especially those dealing with the theme of class conflict, specifically attacking "capital" and "capitalists" and identifying "liberal hypocrisy" with capitalism -- one senses a gradual, and as yet unacknowledged, shifting of the Federation's position from the radicalism of its official programme towards socialism.

Perhaps the best guide to the Federation's stance at the beginning of 1882 on politics and the "social problem" in general -- not just Ireland and the land question -- is the so-called "Parliamentary Mani-

festo of the Democratic Federation"[1] which, since it was unsigned, must have been meant to represent the views of the membership as a whole. The Manifesto's main theme was social reform through independent political action: It reaffirmed the Federation's own determination to "stand aloof from both existing parties" and urged "all genuine Democrats" to do likewise, and to combine politically to "force on the luxurious classes, who dominate both houses of parliament, measures which shall extend the representation and improve the social condition of the great body of the people," whose interests had been ignored while "Tories and Liberals, landlords and capitalists" ruled for their own "joint benefit."

Like the "Tyrone Manifesto" of a few months earlier which had driven the moderate Gladstonian radicals out of the Federation, the "Parliamentary Manifesto" again sharply attacked the Liberal Government. But this time, although Liberal "tyranny" in Ireland was still condemned, the emphasis was more upon the neglect of working-class interests at home and the possibility that the methods used to put down the Irish Land League might be used against an English popular movement. Arguing that even the "widest reforms" before Parliament concerned "only the welfare of the middle class ... traders and tenant-farmers, householders and capitalists," the manifesto accused the Government of being determined to "postpone as long as possible any legislation which can benefit the producers of the country." It warned that the Government's proposed "cloture" rule to limit debate in the House of Commons was, like the "exclusion" procedure used against Bradlaugh, a weapon which could be used in future to stifle the demands of working-class representatives:

---

[1] Published in the Radical, 11 February 1882. All the following quotations from the manifesto are from this source.

Like police interference with radicals' public meetings and the monitoring of their private correspondence, which it also condemned, the cloture proposal represented "yet another step ... towards the enslavement of the people by the governing classes."

"The condition of Ireland" was cited in the Manifesto mainly as an object-lesson in "what may happen here ... so soon as the vested interests of the few are threatened on behalf of the disregarded interests of the many." In this connection the manifesto attacked the ministerial radicals, Chamberlain and John Bright, for their support of coercion -- none the less pointedly for not actually naming them:

> The note of anger and alarm has already been sounded. At Birmingham, the headquarters of Liberal hypocrisy, the eloquent capitalist orator of the past and the dexterous capitalist wirepuller of today agreed together to denounce the democracy on which depends the strength and greatness of England.

It is interesting that the Federation chose here to place so much emphasis on the position of Bright and Chamberlain as capitalists, since the interests of landlords were more directly threatened by the Irish revolt. The manifesto makes no attempt to spell out how the personal "vested interests" of Bright and Chamberlain might have led them to support coercion, but it implies clearly enough that it was because they were capitalists that they were ready to abandon democratic principles. The repeated linking of their "capitalist" status with "hypocrisy" and cynical political "wirepulling" certainly puts this message across, with the further implication that any capitalist, however radical he professed to be, was by definition a member of the ruling class and could be expected to drop his principles and side with his class as soon as there was any real threat to its interests.

The Manifesto's comments on the land question also indicate that the Federation now subscribed to this view. However, its attitude toward land reform was not yet a fully socialist one. The Manifesto urges that only nationalization could "secure the land for the people." Any less drastic reform, such as free trade in land, would "tend only to strengthen the hand of capital" without benefiting "either agricultural laborers or the oppressed artisans of the great cities" because the landlords who "fleeced" the country now would only be replaced by capitalist landowners who would "fleece the country yet more." But there is still no expression here of the Federation's later view that this would happen even under land nationalization if the rest of the economy were left in private hands.

The general picture of the Federation, then, which seems to emerge from a close inspection of its "Parliamentary Manifesto" of February 1882, is one of an organization which had become extremely anti-capitalist but not yet positively socialist. It was still "English Democrats," not socialists, for whom the Federation claimed to speak, and whom it urged at the conclusion of the manifesto to "hold out the hand of fellowship to their brethren who are striving, as we are striving, for peace, freedom and plenty for the workers of the world."

In March 1882, some six weeks after the manifesto was published, the Federation held a public meeting in Glasgow jointly with Henry George. George's sharing of the platform with Hyndman, Helen Taylor and other Federation members on this occasion and his endorsement of the Federation's programme and a resolution expressing its general objects has been cited as an example of his willingness in the early eighties to be

identified with "ardent collectivists."[1] Generally this was true -- at least in the sense that George kept company with socialists and did not publicly repudiate their ideas until 1887 -- but in fact the wording of this 1882 resolution shows quite clearly that so far the Federation had not yet gone beyond the anti-monopolism of George's own position, at least not openly. The resolution demanded only "the destruction of unjust monopolies, particularly the great land monopoly, and the securing for the whole people of equal rights under the law"; it called for "making the land the property of the nation," but did not mention any other form of nationalization.[2]

Although the Federation still was not making any definitely socialist proposals in the spring of 1882, the public position of its leader seems to have changed significantly -- and quite rapidly -- about this time. A comparison of two substantial accounts of Hyndman's views (the first an interview of Hyndman and the second an article he published in the Radical) suggests that by mid-April of 1882 he had arrived at a more final and thoroughgoing commitment to Marxism than he had felt, or had at any rate publicly acknowledged, only seven or eight weeks earlier.

It was at this time, the latter part of February, that Henry George conducted an interview of Hyndman for the New York Irish World on the Irish crisis and the origin and purpose of the Democratic Feder-

---

1 Lawrence, Henry George, p. 78.

2 Glasgow Herald, 21 March 1882, quoted ibid.

ation[1] (already cited above in reference to the Federation's position on Ireland). In this interview, although Hyndman complained that most trade unions were "in the hands of the capitalist class," portrayed Chamberlain as a self-interested capitalist politician, and referred vaguely to the need for measures to give the working classes "their proper share in the government" and "end the domination of the many by the few," he did not make any statement which clearly indicated a socialist position. In discussing the Federation's aims he spoke mainly in political terms of its opposition to Liberal "tyranny" and the allegedly corrupt electoral power of Chamberlain's "caucus," saying little to define in social terms the "sentiment and purpose" which, he and George agreed, the Federation represented and the "Liberal managers" desired to "crush down." Although he refers to "a wave of great revolutionary change" that had "begun to rise" on the Continent and in Ireland and indicates that the Federation's existence was a sign that it was beginning to touch England, Hyndman still portrays the Federation not as the centre of a nascent socialist movement but as the nucleus of a prospective "democratic party" whose primary aim was to organize "the democracy of England" into an independent political force.

The second account of Hyndman's views -- an article written by himself, in which, unlike the interview, he stated his own position[2] without reference to the Federation -- leaves no doubt that he was now

---

1 Irish World, 18 March 1882. George, then acting as correspondent for the paper, sent this despatch from London on 22 February 1882, indicating that he must have interviewed Hyndman shortly before this date. The Radical published an abbreviated reprint of the interview on 1 April 1882.

2 "Coercion and Revolution," Radical, 15 April 1882.

fully committed to Marxism and revolution. For the first time Hyndman explicitly criticized both outright land nationalization, and George's plan for accomplishing the same end by taxation, from a definitely socialist standpoint; named Marx as "one of the greatest thinkers of modern times"; summed up the results of Marx's "exhaustive analysis" of modern industrial society; and proclaimed the "Proletarian Revolution" as the only solution to the "antagonisms" of the capitalist system.

"No one is more convinced ... than I am," wrote Hyndman, that "Nationalisation of the Land ... is a necessary step in our development." But he regretted that it should be "held up as a cure for all the ills of our sad social condition." George, whose "valuable and vigorous book" had inspired the campaign being conducted in the Radical by William Webster and others, had "misapprehended the crucial problems of our industrial system. Mere nationalisation of the land would benefit the workers of a country very little." Neither George nor the "middle-class political economists who hold that their employers and patrons, the capitalists, have a perfect right to take as much as they can get" had perceived what had been revealed by Dr. Karl Marx's "thorough analysis of our nineteenth-century civilisation": that "the capitalist class rob the working class by means of the surplus value which they get out of [their] labour ... more than the landlord class do by their monopoly of land."

At this point Hyndman launched into a sort of basic lesson in Marxian economic history, emphasizing the "transformation ... from individual into social means of production"[1] through the "Capitalist Revolu-

---

[1] Emphasis Hyndman's.

tion" in industry. This had made production a "social action," while "exchange, and appropriation as well, remain individual actions: the social product is taken possession of by the individual capitalist." Here was the "fundamental antagonism, the origin of all the antagonisms in which our society moves." Hyndman elaborated upon these in some detail, finishing with an observation reflecting the new image of the capitalist employer as idle rentier, not industrious owner-manager, which was essential to the socialist insistence upon the equally parasitical status of landlord and capitalist: Hyndman claimed that through the growth of large joint-stock companies run by hired managers "the bourgeoisie is clearly proved to be a useless class, all its active employments being taken by wage-earners."

Hyndman concluded with the prediction that "the working-classes of England will soon find that the very capitalists who are now posing as their leaders will most furiously oppose any re-organisation really for their benefit," and that they could obtain this only through "the Proletarian Revolution": They had to "take hold of the public power, and by means of this power, transform the social means of production into public property," thus removing the "antagonisms" created by the holding of these as individual capital. Ultimately, socially-organized production would make "anachronisms" of both social classes and "the political authority of the state."

As these excerpts indicate, this article was altogether a more positive and unequivocal statement of basic Marxism than Hyndman had set down before, even in England for All, where Marxist and Tory-Democrat ideas had been rather inconclusively jumbled together. He now made clear and explicit a total viewpoint that he had only hinted at or partially expressed

previously. It has been suggested above that others besides Hyndman were pushing the Democratic Federation toward socialism (though not necessarily toward Marxian socialism) from its beginnings; but this April 1882 Radical article does seem to be the earliest direct avowal of a fully Marxist position by anyone in the Federation — at least the earliest to be found in the radical press.[1] No marked change in the position of the Federation itself was immediately evident, however, and even Hyndman did not always talk like a Marxist from this point onward.

When the Federation held its 1882 annual conference the chief subject of debate was whether it should become an avowedly Republican organization.[2] In speaking to this question Charles Murray, most prominent of the old O'Brienites in the Federation, seems to have come closer than Hyndman or any of the others present to expressing a definitely socialist viewpoint. The conference also adopted a declaration of general principles which at first glance seems to imply socialism, but which gives the impression of having been carefully worded so as to be acceptable to both socialist and non-socialist members.

The "conference," held on the 31st of May, was actually a very small affair compared with the Federation's founding conference a

---

1 Belfort Bax published an article on "Modern Socialism" in the August 1879 issue of Modern Thought which has been cited as "possibly the earliest statement by an Englishman" of a Marxian Socialist viewpoint (Barry, Nationalisation, p. 135). But this was a small intellectual journal, the Federation did not yet exist, and Bax, who was living abroad when it was founded, did not become a member until mid or late 1882.

2 Another indication that Republicanism was still alive as a radical political issue — though never to flourish again as it had in the early 1870s — was the organizing of a small new "Republican League" about this time by George Standring, editor of the monthly Republican. The League never amounted to much, but evidently some of the members of its Edinburgh branch formed the nucleus of the Democratic Federation branch established there under the leadership of Robert Banner in the autumn of 1883 (Republican, August 1882; Christian Socialist, November 1883).

year earlier. Only one paper carried a report of the meeting[1]; division figures suggest that only about 25 voting delegates were present, and only three of these are identified as representing branches outside London.[2] It was the Liverpool delegate who raised the question of the Federation's stance on Republicanism, by moving a resolution from his branch "that the establishment of a British Republic be added to the programme." The strongest support for this came from the Nottingham delegate and one London member, A. J. Dadson, who passionately denounced "crowns and sceptres" as "the emblems -- aye the bloody emblems -- of man's humiliation and degradation."[3]

Hyndman and several others, however, took the view that to add an explicit demand for a republic to the programme was both unnecessary and risky. To the cheers of a number of members, Hyndman said he thought they already had in the programme "everything that tended to the bringing about of a social republic." Using this phrase, which

---

1 Radical, 3 June 1882. Even this is not a complete report of all business transacted -- evidently none survives -- but it gives some of the highlights and covers the debate on Republicanism in detail.

2 These were Liverpool, Nottingham and Edinburgh, but only in the case of Liverpool is it clear that the delegate actually represented an established branch. There must also have been a new Manchester branch, although no one is mentioned in this report as representing it, for only a few weeks earlier the Manchester-based "Democratic League of Great Britain and Ireland" (whose officers included Federation members Hyndman, Helen Taylor and Herbert Burrows) had announced at its own annual conference that it had affiliated with the Federation and adopted its programme (Radical, 13 May 1882). There were perhaps one or two more branches or affiliates, for according to Hyndman's biographer, the Federation had six provincial branches by this time (Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman, p. 47).

3 Radical, 3 June 1882.

ultra-radicals had used at least since the early 1870s to express the general idea of a republic set up to foster social as well as political equality, was as close as Hyndman came in this discussion to saying what he probably felt as a Marxist -- that the question of republicanism was strictly secondary to one who was looking toward the "proletarian revolution." Probably he also still felt some of the instinctive Tory distaste for a direct attack on the monarchy that had kept him from even allowing the subject to be discussed at the founding conference of the previous year. Now he only warned, as did Dr. G. B. Clark, that an explicit demand for the abolition of the monarchy would make the Federation "an illegal association."[1]

Dr. Clark argued, along with Robert Banner of Edinburgh, that this was hardly worth the risk because there was just as much "wretchedness" and "despotism" to be found in Republican states like France and the United States as there was in England. Bill Morgan, one of the old O'Brienite group in the Federation, then put in his opinion that the programme as it stood was "as far as they need propose to go just now," for even before they saw this carried "they would see a big upheaval ... and he for one was preparing himself for that." Helen Taylor took exception to the use of violent methods that Morgan seemed to imply, but expressed great enthusiasm for supporting Republicanism in principle. She suggested that if there was a risk of arrest in this, they should leave the Federation as it was and form a separate "peace Republican society" which the members could join if they wished. She would certainly join, and she challenged the authorities to put her in

---

[1] Ibid.

prison if they wished — "it would advance the cause of democracy."[1]

It was Herbert Burrows, however, who suggested the compromise amendment to the Liverpool resolution which was finally adopted by the delegates in a 14-11 vote. Burrows moved that they add to the article in the programme which called for the abolition of the House of Lords the phrase "and all hereditary legislative bodies," so as to "include the monarchy without specifically mentioning it." Charles Murray, in seconding Burrows' amendment, agreed with those who felt that campaigning for a republic should not be a major concern of the Federation. Murray argued that the monarchy was just one of the props supporting the existing system, and only the weakest or most "rotten" one. There were also "props that were not rotten, and it was these that they had to deal with," he said:

> The real cause of all the evils from which the masses suffered was not the monarchy, but the fact that they were in the hands of capitalists. What they wanted was a social revolution even more than a political revolution.[2]

Murray also believed, however, that the existing programme of the Federation was "well calculated to advance that social revolution." Apparently most of the other delegates agreed, and once the question of republicanism had been settled they made only a few other relatively minor changes in the programme: They added disestablishment of the

---

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

Church and the free administration of justice, and altered an existing article to call for annual instead of triennial parliaments.

There is little in these changes to suggest definite movement toward socialism. But the conference also, in adopting the report of the executive council, approved a declaration by the council of the Federation's ultimate purpose which gives some indication of how far the general membership was willing to go at this time in defining the "social revolution" Murray spoke of. The statement, which was quoted two years later in the report of the executive to the 1884 conference as evidence that the Federation had always been socialist in its aims although not in name, reads as follows:

> From the outset the Federation has consistently opposed the landlord and capitalist parties who at present control the machinery of the State. It is the bounden duty of all to spare no effort to ensure the well-being of themselves, their children and their country by their own combined action in favour of the most searching social and political reforms. Such reforms cannot be hoped for from the Government, or from any of the existing political factions. Those whose labour makes the wealth of these islands must rely on themselves alone. It is the aim of the Democratic Federation to afford the means for organizing the workers of Great Britain and Ireland, so that they may be in a position to secure those interests of the mass of the people which are now persistently sacrificed to the greed and selfishness of the well-to-do.[1]

It will be quickly seen that this is too vague to be taken as a definite statement of socialist principles. But it does seem to imply

---

[1] Justice, 9 August 1884. Also reprinted in Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, p. 48.

them in a veiled way -- perhaps deliberately veiled, as if the statement were drawn up in order to express the general aims of the socialists in the organization without raising objections from those whose views did not go beyond radical anti-monopolism. Its theme is primarily the class struggle, and it is perhaps most noteworthy for its reflection of the continuity of radical and socialist thinking on this subject.[1]

During the summer following the 1882 conference Democratic Federation speakers took to the London streets and parks on a regular weekly basis for the first time,[2] apparently following the example of the Labour Emancipation League and other ultra-leftist groups discussed in Chapter VI above. Although Harry Lee described these open-air meetings as consisting of "Socialist addresses ... followed by questions and discussion when nothing more untoward took place," he was probably thinking of meetings a year or two later when he himself would have been present.[3] There is little indication that the Federation's earliest open-air propaganda was really "socialist" in nature. According to the

---

1 Harry Lee felt that the statement proved that "the Socialist position of the class struggle between the workers ... and the employing class" was now "clearly accepted" as the position of the Federation (Lee and Archbold, loc. cit.). This much is probably true, but the "class-struggle" doctrine was not exclusive to the new socialism. As we have seen, this particular socialist idea, or something very similar to it, had been commonplace in popular radicalism at least since the beginnings of Chartism. The class-struggle idea seems to be one of the main lines of continuity between the radical tradition and socialism -- it was a general concept that ultra-radicals and socialists had in common, even if they differed in detail in their views of the class structure and the nature of the struggle.

2 Justice, 9 August 1884; Lee and Archbold, p. 50.

3 Lee and Archbold, loc. cit. Lee had no personal contact with the Federation until the summer of 1883, and did not become a member until the beginning of 1884 (Justice, 16 March 1895).

historical section of the Executive Council's report to the 1884 conference, the meetings began with a campaign of protest against Parliament's suppression of the traditional "right to asylum" for foreign political refugees, and also dealt with "the various points in our programme."[1] The limited evidence of newspaper lecture notices of club talks given by Federation members[2] also suggests that the Federation was not yet conducting an overt socialist propaganda, but was concentrating on relatively concrete and specific issues like Irish coercion,[3] political asylum, the exclusion of Bradlaugh from parliament, or the crushing of the Egyptian revolt. The last was an especially prominent topic in the summer of 1882 for both the Federation and the Manhood Suffrage League, whose speakers invariably condemned the Government for conducting a "bondholders' war" for the benefit of financiers and speculators against a people who had been victimized by foreign exploitation[4] and were justly fighting for liberty. In this way the speakers often put across broader propaganda points, frequently suggestive of a

---

1 Justice, 9 August 1884.

2 They are frequently not identified as such; often they were speaking on behalf of other groups, especially the "Social and Political Education League," a sort of radical club speakers' bureau which at this time, under Charles Murray's direction, was functioning as something of a "front" organization for the Federation and other ultra-radical groups.

3 e.g., William Morgan speaking at a Manhood Suffrage League meeting under Democratic Federation auspices (he belonged to both groups) on the topic "Has not the Irish Land League method of to-day been justified by the method of the English trades' unions of the past?," (National Reformer, 23 July 1882).

4 For brief reports of lectures on the Egyptian war by William Townshend, Patrick Hennessey, Charles Murray and A. J. Dadson, see the club columns of the National Reformer, 13 and 20 August and 3 September 1882.

socialist viewpoint, in the context of specific issues. Land nationalization, adult-suffrage and the other specific demands of the Federation's programme were also frequent starting-points for wide-ranging lectures and debates as were attacks on the Liberals for failing to promote "radical reform for the people,"[1] but there is little sign of theoretical propaganda, i.e. direct attempts to teach abstract doctrine, socialist or otherwise.

Toward the end of 1882 the Federation took the lead in organizing London radicals against a scheme of compulsory national insurance for workingmen which was being promoted by the Rev. Lewery Blackley and an organization called "The National Providence League." Blackley's plan sounded superficially like modern social insurance, in that he proposed "to make everyone pay, and make it a national fund, so that it would never fail" in order to "make every man ... safe from pauperism."[2] But the scheme, which was also hailed as promising relief to the ratepayers, was to be financed entirely by deductions from workers' wages. It seemed to the Federation that employers would receive the only substantial benefits, in the form of poor-rate relief at no cost to themselves, while the workers were to be forced to provide for their old

---

1 Report of Jack Williams lecturing at an MSL meeting on "What have the people gained by the work of the late Session of Parliament?" (Nothing at all, maintained Williams, who urged that the advocacy of franchise extension and land nationalization be given top priority). National Reformer, 10 September 1882.

2 Reynolds's Newspaper, 24 December 1882.

age "by stinting themselves of the necessaries of life in their youth and maturity."[1]

The Federation's campaign against this "compulsory thrift" proposal was in several ways an important landmark in its early development. This was the Federation's first major agitation on a subject not connected with Ireland, and the first in which it could claim that its actions "produced a direct public effect."[2] In the language employed in its denunciations of the insurance plan it moved significantly closer to a direct expression of socialist principles, and in so doing it attracted "a knot of very clever enthusiastic young men" including H. H. Champion, J. L. Joynes, R. P. B. Frost and H. S. Salt[3] — middle-class recruits, who quickly became influential in the organization and did much to push it toward an open avowal of socialism in the following year.

In an effort to counter the widespread publicity and praise Blackley's plan was receiving from clergymen, leader-writers and industrialists, the Federation first issued a manifesto in handbill form

---

1 Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, pp. 48-9; Hyndman, Record, p. 304. Nor did the plan exactly provide for a secure old age with a proposed pension of four shillings a week for contributors over age 70. Sick-pay benefit was to be eight shillings (Republican, January 1883).

2 Hyndman, loc. cit.

3 Ibid., p. 306.

which read as follows:

> Fellow Citizens, the prevention of pauperism which they now urge you to undertake means the protection of their own pockets. If they really want to prevent pauperism, let these self-seekers give up trading upon your bitter competition for starvation wages. There are hundreds of thousands in this rich England of ours living in squalor and misery to-day in order that landowners and capitalists may flourish in luxury and ease. 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 each day's work. All the rest of the production is taken for nothing by the classes who live in idleness on the fruits of your toil .... Prevention of pauperism! Tell these wealthy hypocrites to give up their profitable monopolies; tell those who spend on cigars more than you get in wages -- tell them that compulsory insurance must be carried out at their expense.[1]

It will be seen that this is a much clearer statement of basic socialist concepts -- particularly in the view of class conflict it reflects and in its expression, in all but the name, of the doctrine of "surplus value" -- than the declaration of principles adopted the previous summer at the 1882 conference. This was about as far as the Federation could go in dealing with a specific issue from a socialist viewpoint without directly acknowledging that it was consciously basing its argument on socialist theory; and probably not all the members were aware of this if it was indeed the case.

Members of the Federation attended several meetings held in London in support of the insurance proposal to heckle its advocates and put forward their own position, but this had little effect until

---

[1] Reprinted in Lee and Archbold, Social Democracy, p. 49.

Blackley and his supporters called a large public meeting at Holborn Town Hall on the 19th of December "to sanction and bless the whole enterprise."[1] They opened the meeting unaware that the Federation had managed to pack the hall at least two-to-one with its own working-class sympathizers, ready to play their parts on the cue of its chosen speakers H. W. Rowland and Patrick Hennessey, both veteran radical agitators.[2] After Blackley had outlined his scheme and a resolution hailing it "with satisfaction" had been routinely moved and seconded, Rowland rose to propose an amendment and "a scene of great confusion" suddenly ensued, the audience refusing to hear anything more until Rowland was allowed to speak.[3] His "amendment," seconded by Hennessey, stated "that this meeting is of opinion that the true and only means of preventing pauperism is by securing for the producing classes the fruits of their labour." After a brief debate this was carried as a substantive resolution to the accompaniment of "loud cheering," after which the meeting was "rather hastily terminated"[4] and nothing further was heard of the compulsory insurance plan.

One socialist observer claimed that this was the first public meeting "called by middle class people for middle class ends" at which London artisans had "declared for a resolution embodying one of the fundamental principles of socialism, viz., the right of the producer to the wealth he creates" -- a principle which "strikes at the whole basis and

---

1 Ibid.; Hyndman, Record, p. 304.

2 Hyndman, Record, p. 306.

3 Reynolds's Newspaper, 24 December 1882.

4 Ibid.

structure of modern society and cold-blooded political economy."[1] It should be noted, however, that this principle did not belong exclusively to conscious socialism. In itself, at least so far as it was carried in the actual words of the resolution (assuming they were correctly reported in Reynolds's Newspaper), it reflects the continuity of the British popular radical tradition -- the tradition in which Rowland and Hennessey had been bred[2] -- as much as the emergence of the new socialist viewpoint. The resolution called for possession by the workers of "the fruits of their labours," not "the means of producing wealth" as stated in Harry Lee's paraphrase of it.[3] The two phrases are not identical in meaning, for the second one more definitely implies socialism in calling for workers' control over the means of production as well as the things produced. The most advanced radicals had long held that "all wealth was created by labour," and that workers were therefore entitled to the "full fruits of their labour," without necessarily demanding common ownership of all the instruments of production. Thus most of the radical workingmen who supported the Federation's resolution against compulsory insurance probably were not consciously going beyond ideas that were part of their own tradition. It is in the handbill quoted above rather than in this resolution that we find the clearer indication that the Federation was now moving bdyond the radical tradition. Perhaps the best conclusion

---

1 C. J. Garcia, "A New Departure," Republican, January 1883.

2 Rowland and Hennessey apparently did not complete the transition from radicalism to socialism; they dropped out of the Federation after it openly committed itself to socialism in mid-1883.

3 Lee and Archbold, Social Democracy in Britain, p. 49.

that may be drawn from the story of the compulsory insurance agitation and the other evidence reviewed above is that by the end of 1882 the Federation had approached very near to a fully socialist position but was not yet conducting a direct socialist propaganda: It was putting its emphasis on ideas that were common to both socialism and the older ultra-radicalism, and expressing them in the context of agitations on specific public issues.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE FEDERATION II: FULL COMMITMENT TO SOCIALISM, 1883-4

1883: The Federation's Socialism "Made Plain"

In the early months of 1883 the Democratic Federation held a series of public conferences which marked an important new stage in its movement toward a definite, open commitment to socialism. At these conferences, held in the hall at Palace Chambers, Westminster, where the Federation had its offices, Hyndman gave a total of six addresses outlining a programme of "Practical Remedies for Pressing Needs" which he had drafted. These proposals included the compulsory construction and maintenance of "wholesome" low-rent housing at public expense, free and compulsory education with free school meals, an eight-hour work day in all trades, the nationalization of railways, mines and banking, cumulative taxation of incomes over three hundred pounds a year, and the "co-operative organization" of unemployed workers by the state. In discussing these proposals and officially adopting them as immediate objectives -- the first major addition to its original programme of mainly political demands -- the Federation gave "a more definite social basis" to its propaganda and inspired the enthusiastic support of a number of men who were soon to become leading advocates of socialism. These included both new members and earlier recruits who only now became fully active.[1]

---

[1] Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, pp. 50-51; Hyndman, Record, p. 296; Democratic Federation, Socialism Made Plain (1883). pp. 5-6; Justice, 9 August 1884.

The importance of this new social programme in the Federation's development lay not so much in the specific measures advocated -- there was little in them that had not already been proposed some time earlier by extreme radicals -- as in the way they were advocated from the time Hyndman first proposed them: not as ends in themselves, but as "stepping stones," "palliatives" or "transition-remedies," means to a larger end. "Our Stepping-Stones or Palliatives were only formulated and agitated for as ameliorative measures to the existing capitalist anarchy," wrote Hyndman in 1911. "Throughout we all of us preached, then as now, that no great or permanent benefit" could be expected from such measures alone. Only the establishment of a fully socialist economy could bring about "complete social transformation."[1] Another important feature of the "Stepping-Stones" proposals is that they were all measures which were to be implemented by the State through Acts of Parliament: Hence their adoption by the Federation indicated that it was moving not just toward socialism, but toward centralized state socialism rather than other forms. Not only was this in line with Marxism, but at the same time it was compatible with the British popular radical tradition. The prominence given to these proposals by the Federation indicates the extent to which the old Chartist and radical faith in a democratic parliament as an instrument of social reform was carried over into the new socialist tradition that was now being shaped.[2]

---

1 Hyndman, Record, p. 313.

2 Barry, Nationalisation in British Politics, pp. 136-7; Henry Collins, "The Marxism of the Social-Democratic Federation," Essays in Labour History 1886-1923, ed. A. Briggs and J. Saville (1971), pp. 57-8.

Hyndman's recollection that these "palliative" measures were regarded from the outset only as intermediate steps toward the ultimate goal of full socialism is confirmed by two pamphlets he wrote in early 1883. In one of these he discussed some of the "transition-remedies" (as he called them on this occasion) in considerable detail, but pointed out that "not one of these measures goes to the root of the social difficulty of the time." Their real purpose, he indicated, was to create a healthier and better-educated working class which would be more capable of appreciating and demanding a socialist system.[1] In the other pamphlet Hyndman cited the existence of the Democratic Federation as one sign of the rising revolutionary temper of the times, and stated -- evidently for the first time when speaking on behalf of the Federation and not just for himself -- that its goals included not only those stated in its formal programme but "ultimately the control of the machinery of production by the working-class."[2] We have seen that Hyndman himself had this definitively socialist end in view by April 1882 at the latest, but not until this pamphlet was written nearly a year later do we find clear evidence of him ascribing it to the Federation as a whole. In doing so he must have felt that he now had considerably stronger support from the membership than before.

One important source of this support was the new -- and newly-active -- members of the Federation. There is little direct evidence of the exact views of any given individual at a given date, but the indications are that those who became active from about the beginning

---

1 The Social Reconstruction of England (1883), pp. 13-19.

2 The Coming Revolution in England (1883), p. 22.

of 1883, that is in the period of the "stepping stones" conferences, strongly favoured the taking of a more definite socialist line by the organization. One of these was Belfort Bax, a Marxist since 1879, who had joined in mid or late 1882 on returning from Berlin, where he had been correspondent for a London paper.[1] His enthusiasm aroused by the conferences, he "took an increasingly active part" in the work of the Federation thereafter.[2] According to Bax, who took pride in having been instrumental in persuading William Morris to join during the conferences, "we got a good many useful recruits at that time." Bax believed it was "really ... then — the beginning of 1883" when "the socialist movement may be said to have definitely started in England,"[3] and that it was through the "Stepping Stones" conferences that the Federation was most conclusively "brought into the paths of socialism."[4]

Bax also believed that it was because of these meetings that Harry Quelch joined the Federation.[5] Actually Quelch — whom Bax described as "the living personification of ... the idea of the emancipation and rebirth of the working-class through the transformation of civilisation into socialism"[6] — had been a member since 1881. But

---

1 E. B. Bax, Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Mid and Late Victorian (1918), p. 42.

2 Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy, p. 51.

3 Bax, "How I Became a Socialist," Justice, 9 June 1894.

4 Bax, introduction to Harry Quelch, Literary Remains (1914), p. 11.

5 Ibid. Quelch's early background, his association with F. W. Soutter and the Southwark Radical Club and his personal transition from radicalism to socialism, are discussed in Chapter VI above, pp. 232-40.

6 Ibid., p. 20.

only now did he begin to speak up and make his presence felt. He had already read Capital -- having taught himself French to do so -- and Hyndman, evidently impressed by his mastery of Marx's teachings on hearing him argue against the Malthusian viewpoint at one of the "Stepping Stones" conferences, sought him out and asked him to lecture for the Federation.[1] Although reluctant at first because of shyness about public speaking, Quelch soon became one of the most active and prominent members; he was elected to the Executive in mid-1883 and was later made editor of Justice.

William Morris, the most illustrious of the new recruits gained by the Federation at the time of the "Stepping Stones" meetings, made it clear in his 1894 reminiscences for Justice[2] that he had already passed the point of "conversion" to socialism by the time he joined in January 1883. "Some months" before joining, Morris recalled, he had come to the end of a period of active radicalism "during which I saw my ideal clear enough, but had no hope of any realisation of it." Now leaning toward socialism, he read J. S. Mill's unfinished "Chapters on Socialism" published posthumously in the Fortnightly Review during 1879. These articles -- quite contrary to Mill's intention -- "put the finishing touch" to Morris's conversion. When he joined the Federation and then "tackled Marx" in order to gain a fuller understanding of his new creed and equip himself for public debate, he did so because he had "conceived a hope of the realisation of my ideal" which he had not possessed before. By the discovery of this new hope in socialism, Morris

---

1 Social-Democratic Federation, How I Became a Socialist, p. 77.

2 Morris, "How I Became a Socialist," Justice, 16 June 1894.

wrote, "the whole face of things was changed to me ... and all I had to do then in order to become a Socialist was to hook myself on to the practical movement."[1]

In an 1883 letter explaining his new commitment to socialism and the work of the Federation, Morris had this to say about his abandonment of conventional radicalism:

> For my part I used to think that one might further real socialistic progress by doing what one could on the lines of ordinary middle-class Radicalism: I have been driven of late to the conclusion that I was mistaken; that Radicalism is on the wrong line, so to say, and will never develop into anything more than Radicalism; in fact that it is made for and by and will always be under the control of rich capitalists; they will have no objection to its political development, if they think they can stop it there; but as to real social changes, they will not allow them if they can help it ... I can see no use in people having political freedom unless they use it as an instrument for leading reasonable and manlike lives ... The contrasts of rich and poor are unendurable and ought not to be endured by either rich or poor. Now it seems to me that, feeling this, I am bound to act for the destruction of the system that seems to me mere oppression and obstruction.[2]

The widely admired poet and artist was, of course, a prize "catch" for the struggling Federation. Morris, who quickly began to inspire others with his romantic neo-medievalist vision of the socialist future, was probably the most valuable single recruit of this period in the eyes of those already in the Federation who were anxious to see it fully and publicly committed to socialism. The new influence of Morris is

---

1 Ibid.

2 Quoted in Beer, History of British Socialism, Vol. II, pp. 250-51.

clearly visible in Hyndman's early-1883 pamphlets The Coming Revolution in England and The Social Reconstruction of England, especially in the latter, where in the course of condemning the profit system for creating "cheapness and nastiness and ugliness in every direction" in terminology more usually associated with Morris than himself, he directly cites Morris as "the poet ... driven to look ... for some remedy for the hideousness thrust upon him." Also in typically Morrisian terms, Hyndman looks back upon the fifteenth century as a kind of golden age of the common people when supposedly "almost everybody ... owned his own means of production ... owning also the product when complete" and society was still largely in the pre-capitalist "happy state" of production for use, not for profit; craftsmanship was highly valued; and the ordinary man could find creative satisfaction in his daily work.[1]

Comparable in importance to Morris among the Federation's new recruits of early 1883 was a man of very different background and personality, the young ex-Army officer Henry Hyde Champion.[2] As a

---

1 Social Reconstruction, pp. 24-29. In The Coming Revolution Hyndman also seems to reflect Morris's influence in the intense language with which he condemns "the utter rottenness" of modern society and "the decadence of parliament" (pp. 25-8). But the "social-imperialist" mode of thought which was usually apparent in Hyndman's writings also comes through here when he concludes by asserting that with the proper social arrangements "the English people would soon rise to the level of the most glorious periods of our past history ... The race is really as capable as ever. In America, in Australia, all the world over, the Anglo-Saxon blood is still second to none." (p. 32).

2 For Champion's brilliant but intrigue-ridden career in socialist and labour politics up to 1894, when he emigrated to Australia, see Henry Pelling, "H. H. Champion: Pioneer of Labour Representation," Cambridge Journal, Vol. VI (1953) pp. 222-238, which draws upon Champion's 1908 reminiscences in a small Australian journal, the Melbourne Trident. If Hyndman's recollection cited above is correct (and there is no conclusive evidence on the point), Champion joined the Federation as a result of the compulsory insurance protest of late 1882, thus probably before the "Stepping Stones" conferences. But whatever the exact date, he seems to have become active and influential, like the others discussed here, during the early months of 1883.

lieutenant in the Royal Artillery, Champion had served in the Afghan War in India, where he contracted typhoid fever in 1881 and was sent home to recover. During his convalescence he read George's Progress and Poverty; then, having returned to duty as adjutant of a unit at Portsmouth, he began a course of intensive reading in works on political economy ranging from Adam Smith through Ricardo and Mill to Marx's Capital. "Gradually, step by step, I was driven to socialism," Champion recalled.[1] Motivated both by his new convictions and his disgust at the campaign to put down the Egyptian rebellion, Champion resigned his commission in September 1882. With capital provided by his father to set him up as a publisher he soon entered into his new career in left-wing political agitation, evidently joining both the Land Nationalisation Society and the Democratic Federation within a short time.[2]

The energetic and assertive Champion quickly became a favourite of Hyndman's in 1883, and as a strong supporter of Hyndman's policies against "the Liberal-Radical elements who sought to prevent the Federation from becoming a fully Marxist body" he was particularly important in the timing of the Federation's movement toward this position. Champion seems to have started from basically the same "Tory-Democrat," extremely anti-Liberal political standpoint as Hyndman, and also shared some of the same faults as a leader -- particularly the tendency to be dictatorial and arrogant. Within a few months of joining the Federation, Champion was elected its secretary and became a member of the executive

---

1 Quoted in Pelling, "H. H. Champion," p. 223.

2 Ibid.; Report of the Land Nationalisation Society, 1881-3, p. 11 (Champion's name appears on a list of subscribers to the Society, which also includes his close associates J. L. Joynes and R. P. B. Frost and several others who were Federation members).

committee, one of a number of committed socialists who came onto it in mid-1883 after only a short period of activity in the organization.[1] Meanwhile, with J. L. Joynes and R. P. B. Frost, who had joined along with him, Champion launched the monthly Christian Socialist, which was soon largely at the service of the Federation although officially the organ of the new Land Reform Union. As part-owner of the Modern Press, Champion was able to secure its facilities for the publication of Justice from the beginning of 1884, as well as various penny socialist pamphlets and another journal edited by Federation members (Joynes and Belfort Bax), the socialist monthly review To-Day. "Indeed," as Harry Lee commented, it is "hard to know how the Democratic Federation would have fared in the matter of Socialist literature without H. H. Champion."[2]

Another particularly important Federation recruit of the period of the "Stepping Stones" conferences was the young Scottish tailor James Macdonald, later to become a leading figure in the trade-union world and the Independent Labour Party. Macdonald, who had been strongly influenced by the Marxist exiles of the Tottenham Street "German Club" in 1881 and had joined with them and others in forming the Marylebone Central Democratic Association,[3] seems to have waited until he could be

---

1 Pelling, "H. H. Champion," pp. 223-4; p. 233. One important difference between Champion and Hyndman, however, was that Champion was much quicker to become convinced of the need for a socialist alliance with the trade-union movement. Also, in his eagerness to see practical results from the Federation's work he was all too ready to become involved in questionable political alliances. Largely for these reasons he eventually fell out with Hyndman and others in the Federation and ceased working with it in 1887.

2 Ibid; Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, p. 58.

3 For Macdonald and the Marylebone Central Democratic Association see Chapter III above, pp. 78-9, and Chapter VI, pp. 226-7.

sure the Federation was moving toward a full commitment to socialism. He then not only joined it himself, but evidently brought the whole of his Marylebone club with him as a new branch, giving the Federation both a much-needed accession of numerical strength and a further impetus toward an open declaration of socialism. Dates and details are obscure, but Macdonald attended the "Stepping Stones" conferences and joined either then or shortly afterward.[1] He became a member of the Executive in mid-1883, and by autumn the Federation's "strongest branch in London" was the Marylebone branch, which had been formed by the Marylebone Central Democratic Association "coming over in a body" sometime during the preceding months. It brought with it "a number of active workers," some of them already experienced agitators, and conducted its own programme of regular Sunday evening lectures.[2]

Although by the spring of 1883 the Federation was rapidly approaching a full and public commitment to Marxian socialism, many members were still strongly concerned with land reform and evidently still eager to co-operate with Henry George. The continuing close connection of the Federation with the land nationalization movement and with George, who was now approaching the height of his influence in Britain, was clearly displayed in the formation of a new land society, the Land Reform Union, and the appearance shortly afterward of the Christian Socialist as its organ. The Land Reform Union was founded by "some of the most energetic

---

1 Harry Quelch in How I Became a Socialist, p. 77; Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy, p. 51.

2 Lee and Archbold, p. 55. Lee notes that one of the prominent members of the branch at this time was Frank Harris, novelist, playwright and editor, who has become well-known in recent years as the author of the sexually-explicit autobiography My Life and Loves.

members" of A. R. Wallace's Land Nationalisation Society[1] and of the Federation -- many of them members of both organizations -- at an April 16th meeting, one of a series of small gatherings held to discuss George's Progress and Poverty. It was noted at this meeting that George's theories were not new in England -- "all philosophers from John Locke to J. S. Mill and H. Spencer have maintained that the land should be used for the benefit of the community and not for the advantage of individuals" -- but it was emphasized that "Mr. George is the first who has been able to popularize this idea."[2]

Those present determined to use George's growing popularity as the inspirational force for a broadly-based new organization which, with the general object of "the restitution of the land to the people," would serve as a "rallying centre" for Federation members, Wallaceites, Georgeists, in fact everyone who sought some form of land nationalization.[3] H. H. Champion was treasurer of the new organization, and R. P. B. Frost its secretary.[4] Dr. G. B. Clark was a prominent member, and others in the Federation who joined it included J. L. Joynes, John Sketchley, Henry Salt and Jack Williams. The later Fabian luminaries George Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb and Sydney Olivier were also early members of the Land Reform Union.[5] The group sponsored George's successful speaking campaign through England and Scotland during his second visit to Britain in 1884,

---

1 Report of the Land Nationalisation Society, 1883-4, p. 24.

2 Christian Socialist, June 1883.

3 Ibid.; Christian Socialist "Supplement," July 1883.

4 Christian Socialist, June 1883.

5 E. E. Barry, Nationalisation in British Politics, p. 60.

becoming officially a Georgeist body in April of that year and changing its name to the "English Land Restoration League."[1]

H. W. Lee has emphasized the role of the Christian Socialist as a socialist organ and its effectiveness in attracting recruits to the emerging movement who were still "a little fearful of the name of Socialist without some dilution." Lee claimed, as "a regular reader of it for over a twelvemonth," that the paper was on the whole "far more socialist than Christian."[2] However, the content of the paper's first three issues (June, July and August, 1883) suggests that initially, at least, it represented something more moderate and vague than the revolutionary Marxian socialism to which the Federation had publicly committed itself in its June manifesto Socialism Made Plain (discussed below). Both the paper's early statements of policy and the fact that no reports of Democratic Federation activities appear until the fourth number seem to indicate that editors Joynes, Champion and Frost — though they were all Federation members by June 1883 and the first two were on the executive committee that issued Socialism Made Plain at this time — were still in transition as far as their position on socialism is concerned; that is, they were still undecided between Marxian or "Christian" socialism and still largely preoccupied with Henry George and land reform. At the same time that they were asking "why workmen should continue to be the slaves of capital" and reviewing and defending the teachings of Marx in Capital, the editors were expressing pride in taking "the name of which Maurice and Kingsley were proud" and were consciously following their example by declaring that "class hatreds and class prejudices shall be excluded from our paper"

---

1 Justice, 5 April 1884.

2 Lee and Archbold, Social Democracy in Britain, pp. 58-9.

and that the duty of "true reformers" was to "heal the wounds of humanity" and not aggravate them by "setting class against class."[1] While pointing out "the error of supposing that the only reform needed is that of land," they were uncritically giving prominence to the views of Henry George,[2] who supposed exactly that.

Even after the Christian Socialist began regular coverage of the Democratic Federation's activities in the September 1883 number, it remained as much a Georgeist as a socialist organ for at least the rest of the year. George's writings continued to be one of the chief features of the paper; the September issue carried the first of a new series of columns by him on "Problems of the Time." In the following issues reports of Land Reform Union activities seem to become briefer and more perfunctory in comparison with the increasing coverage of the Federation, but in the December number a detailed report of an LRU meeting in London addressed by Michael Davitt, now one of George's most prominent followers, indicated the continuation of close ties between the two organizations. According to this article both the Federation and the LRU were "doing their utmost" to support Davitt's appeal for co-operation between English and Irish working people in fighting their "common enemy," the monopolists of land.[3]

In June 1883, the month in which the Christian Socialist first appeared, the Federation held its third annual conference. This conference was no doubt the most noteworthy single event of the year for the organization, for it gave official acknowledgement to the tendencies

---

1 Christian Socialist, June and July 1883.

2 Ibid., July 1883. The early issues prominently feature a series of lengthy articles by George on "Political Economy."

3 Ibid., December 1883.

evident in the preceding months by electing a predominantly socialist executive committee and issuing the manifesto Socialism Made Plain,[1] the Federation's first definite and unequivocal pronouncement in favour of socialism. Although its name was not to be changed to "Social-Democratic Federation" for another year, and in many other ways — in programme, ideas, personnel and style of agitation — it continued to show the influence of the older popular radical tradition, the Federation may be considered unquestionably a socialist organization from this point onward.

Socialism Made Plain, subtitled "the Social and Political Manifesto" of the Federation, opens with a condemnation of every existing political faction — "Tories or Conservatives, Whigs, Liberals or Radicals" — for striving "only to keep the workers ignorant of the truths which most nearly concern them." It continues with a brief Marxian analysis (although the document never specifically mentions Marx) of

---

[1] The manifesto lists the following fifteen persons as members of this executive — the earliest of which a complete listing is available:

> Herbert Burrows, H. H. Champion (secretary), John Clark, A. J. Dadson, Patrick Hennessey, H. M. Hyndman (chairman), J. L. Joynes, Tom S. Lemon, James Macdonald, William Morris (treasurer), James Murray, H. W. Rowland, Andreas Scheu, Helen Taylor and John Williams.

Five of these — Champion, Joynes, Macdonald, Morris and Scheu — were relatively recent recruits serving on the executive for the first time, all of whom apparently strongly favored the new commitment to socialism. A later edition of the manifesto shows that by November 1883 there had been further changes in the executive, five new names being added (Belfort Bax and Harry Quelch, R. D. Butler, N. Fuller and J. Taylor) and three dropped (Dadson, Hennessey and Rowland). The addition of Butler to the committee and the continued presence of Murray indicates that the group of old O'Brienites from the Manhood Suffrage League who had supported the Federation from the beginning were still an important element in it after the transition to avowed socialism.

Britain's economic development since 1832, concluding that "Whilst the realised wealth and the annual income of the country have more than trebled, those who create these riches remain a wage-slave class, overworked and underfed, at the mercy of every crisis and the victims of each succeeding depression." All the vast improvements in manufacturing and communications had brought only "luxury for the few and misery and degradation for the many." Workers now returned the full value of their day's wages "in the first two or three hours" of the workday, all the rest of their production -- the "surplus value" -- going to enrich the classes who lived on profits, rent and interest.[1]

Turning to positive reform proposals, the manifesto first lists some of the purely political demands of the Federation's original programme, e.g. full adult suffrage, paid representatives, national referenda on "all grave issues," abolition of "all hereditary authority." But it clearly identifies these measures as no more than necessary prerequisites to the real work of reform, warning that "mere political machinery is worthless unless used to produce good social conditions."[2] As one major step in this direction the manifesto calls for nationalization of the land in both country and town, to be "held, used, built over and cultivated upon such terms as the people themselves see fit to ordain." In this demand it was of course still on familiar radical

---

1 Democratic Federation, Socialism Made Plain (1883), pp. 1-5.

2 Ibid., pp. 3-4.

ground; but the next paragraph goes clearly beyond the radical pale, asserting that

> private ownership of land in our present society is only one and not the worst form of monopoly which enables the wealthy classes to use the means of production against the labourers whom they enslave. Of the £1,000,000,000 taken by the classes who live without labour out of a total yearly production of £1,300,000,000, the landlords who have seized our soil, and shut us out from its enjoyment, absorb little more than £60,000,000 as their direct share ... Above all, the active capitalist class, the loan-managers, the farmers, the mine-exploiters, the contractors, the middle-men, the factory-lords -- these, the modern slave-drivers, these are they who, through their money, machinery, capital, and credit turn every advance in human knowledge, every further improvement in human dexterity, into an engine for accumulating wealth out of other men's labour, and for extracting more and yet more surplus value out of the wage-slaves whom they employ. So long as the means of production, either of raw materials or of manufactured goods are the monopoly of a class, so long must the labourers on the farm, in the mine or in the factory sell themselves for a bare subsistence wage. As land must in future be a national possession, so must the other means of producing and distributing wealth. The creation of wealth is already a social business ... it is high time that exchange of the produce should be social too, and removed from the control of individual greed and individual profit.[1]

As the first practical steps in this direction, the manifesto sets forth the programme of "stepping stones to a happier period" (already discussed above) which had been adopted by the Federation at the special series of conferences held several months earlier. By these

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

measures, it urged,

> a healthy, independent, and thoroughly educated people will steadily grow up around us, ready to abandon that baneful competition for starvation wages which ruins our present workers, ready to organize the labour of each for the benefit of all, determined, too, to take control finally of the entire social and political machinery of a state in which class distinctions and class privileges shall cease to be.[1]

In a concluding expression of faith that "such an ideal of true greatness and glory needs but intelligence, enthusiasm, and combination, to make it a reality even in our own day," the manifesto appealed to "every man and woman ... who is weary of this miserable huckster's society ... every lover of freedom" to support the Democratic Federation "in our endeavor to form a real party of the people, which shall secure a noble future for our own and other lands."[2]

The commitment of the Federation to the new socialist vision which was announced in Socialism Made Plain was described in the report of the executive to the next (1884) annual conference as "a new and most hopeful start,"[3] but it was also the signal for another wave of resignations from the organization as the formerly blurred distinction between "advanced radicals" and socialists became uncomfortably clear. Despite the earlier signs which have been noted here that the Federation's leadership was moving toward the position set forth in Socialism Made Plain, the manifesto apparently "fell like a bombshell among the

---

1 Ibid., p. 6.

2 Ibid., p. 7.

3 Justice, 9 August 1884.

less advanced members and had the effect of frightening them out of the movement."[1] Its publication resulted in the retirement of "almost everyone who was not a convinced socialist, or who had not at least considerable leanings toward socialism."[2] Among these was Dr. G. B. Clark, one of the most prominent members up to this time, who left stating that he "could not subscribe to the doctrines of socialism," although he seemed to have done so to a considerable extent during his association with the IWMA in the early 1870s, and he later became (at least for a time) a member of the Fabian Society.[3] Two other prominent figures of the Federation's early days, the veteran ultra-radicals H. W. Rowland and Patrick Hennessey, also dropped out, but in their case the reason may not have been disapproval of socialism. They were among the signers of Socialism Made Plain and apparently stayed with the Federation for a month or two after its publication; when Helen Taylor heard of their leaving from Hyndman she referred only to their having been "capricious" and "quarrelsome" in replying that she did not consider them much of a loss to the organization.[4]

There is little indication of who the others were who resigned in this period or how many there were, but the Federation clearly was in a very weak position numerically all through the summer and autumn of 1883.

---

1 James Macdonald, "How I Became a Socialist," Justice, 11 July 1896.

2 Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy, p. 53.

3 Ibid.; G. B. Clark, "The International: Recollections," Socialist Review, Vol. 12 No. 70 (July-September, 1914), pp. 249-55. See also Chapter VI above, p. 186 note 1 . Possibly it was Marxian state centralism and not all forms of socialism to which Clark particularly objected.

4 Taylor to Hyndman (undated, but from internal evidence in the Hyndman letter to which this responds, clearly September 1883), Mill-Taylor Collection (LSE) Volume XVIII.

The number of organized branches and affiliated bodies was "few indeed" when the 1883 conference met, the bulk of the organization's work was being "carried on by less than a dozen really earnest men," and it was largely dependent for its funds "upon the purse of a single individual" (Hyndman).[1] By autumn, after a number of radical resignations and socialist recruitments, the picture was much the same, the number of branches still being "very few" and the membership consisting largely of "individual adherents" in London and around the country.[2] The small size of the Federation was a well-kept secret, however, as is obvious from the Quarterly Review's alarmed portrayal of the organization at this time as a revolutionary juggernaut whose ranks were "so numerous as to be counted by tens of thousands."[3] Since the Federation seems to have been careful not to reveal the actual size of its membership, we may assume it was happy to let the public believe such exaggerated reports if it would; though insiders on the London radical scene no doubt knew enough to laugh at them.[4]

Thanks largely to the monthly reports published in the Christian Socialist from September 1883, there is some rather more definite information available on the character of the Federation's activities in this

---

1 Justice, 9 August 1884.

2 Lee and Archbold, Social Democracy, p. 551.

3 Quarterly Review, Volume 156 (1883), p. 359.

4 Only once — in 1894 -- did the Federation publish a total membership figure (4,000 at this time) in an annual conference report. For an attempt to estimate the Federation's strength each year from 1884 onward, see C. Tsuzuki, H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism (Oxford 1961), Appendix B. Tsuzuki's estimate for 1884 is 500 members in 25 branches; the figures for 1883 would no doubt be much lower than this.

period -- the months between its declaration of commitment to socialism and the appearance of its own socialist journal Justice in early 1884.

The most immediately noticeable changes in the Federation's method of agitation during these months were a new readiness to explicitly identify its position on a given issue as a socialist one and a tendency toward a more theoretical kind of propaganda, i.e., attempts by Federation speakers to teach socialist principles directly as well as implying them indirectly through their approach to immediate issues. Examples of both of these new features appear in the first Christian Socialist report on Federation activities. On 17 July 1883 the Executive Council issued a resolution condemning "as socialists" the actions of the "capitalist" press in both England and France, which was allegedly stirring up feelings of hostility and rivalry between the two nations in regard to their "wars of aggrandisement" in North Africa. The resolution also stated the socialist doctrine of the identity of interest of the working classes in all countries.[1] On the 22d of August, a public meeting held by the Marylebone Branch featured one of the Federation's earliest reported attempts at the direct inculcation of socialist doctrine in the abstract, a lecture on "Socialism v. Liberalism" by Frank Harris. His main theme a defence of the socialist principle of "subordinating individual rights to the rights of the community," Harris argued that when "pushed to its conclusion" the Liberal doctrine of unfettered individual freedom only "resulted in the

---

[1] Christian Socialist, September 1883.

oppression of the weakest."[1]

By October, the Federation claimed, it had sold nearly 26,000 copies of Socialism Made Plain. Outdoor socialist meetings now were being carried on regularly in London's parks and commons by speakers from both the Federation and Joseph Lane's East End-based Labour Emancipation League, which by this time was being described as an "associate" organization although it was not yet formally affiliated. Lane's group, already old hands at open-air propaganda, won the Federation's praise for their "indefatigably" conducted meetings on Mile End Waste, and the Federation, too, by this time "possessed a small band of speakers fairly trained to open-air work"; Hyndman, Jack Williams, H. H. Champion and Harry Quelch were among the most active. A number of provincial meetings had been held, resulting in negotiations to form new branches at Birmingham, Bristol, Nottingham and Edinburgh. The Federation, in another move showing its increased emphasis on direct preaching of the socialist gospel, was planning to hire a large central London hall for a series of lectures at regular intervals by "competent speakers on scientific socialism."[2]

---

1 Ibid. In the provinces, however, Federation members were perhaps still more concerned with immediate political reforms than with abstract social theory; this at least is the implication of an August 20 resolution by the Newcastle Branch, cited in this same report, which called for "a radical reform of Parliamentary representation ... on the lines indicated by Mr. Chamberlain" in a recent Birmingham speech. This resolution, with its exclusive emphasis upon reforms like universal suffrage, equal electoral districts, payment of members and shorter parliaments, gives no indication of socialist objectives; and its favourable reference to Chamberlain is of course much at odds with the Federation's longstanding condemnation of him as a "capitalist wirepuller."

2 Christian Socialist, September and October 1883; Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy, p. 53.

By the end of 1883, new branches seemed to be securely established at Birmingham and Edinburgh, the latter having been formed by "the more active and energetic members" of the local chapter of George Standring's Republican League. William Morris had publicized the socialist vision among the academic community, attracting a "large and attentive gathering" to hear his "Art under Plutocracy" lecture at Oxford; in London, besides open-air propaganda, the Federation now had an average of seven members out every Sunday giving addresses at the weekly meetings of the various workingmen's clubs.[1] Also about this time it elaborated in detail the position outlined by Socialism Made Plain in two longer theoretical statements, Hyndman's The Historical Basis of Socialism (1883) and A Summary of the Principles of Socialism (1884), written jointly by Hyndman and Morris. These works gave further confirmation that the Federation "had now developed ... into a thoroughgoing revolutionary organisation"[2] which advocated the ultimate state ownership and control of all the means of production, distribution and exchange. This was to be achieved gradually through the nationalisation of industries deemed "ripe" for state management by a fully democratized Parliament in which members representing the working-class interest had gained a majority; in the emphasis on democracy and the assumption that socialist goals were to be reached through Parliamentary action according to established

---

1 Christian Socialist, November and December 1883. Morris, although not at his best in street-corner oratory, was also eager from the beginning to do his share of what Frank Kitz called the "rough work of the movement." For a moving personal recollection of Morris attempting to inspire the "toil-worn crowd in ... gloomy East End byways" with his "dream of a beautiful England free from the curse of commercialism," see Kitz, "Recollections and Reflections," Freedom, May 1912.

2 Hyndman, Record, p. 313.

legal processes we see the continuity of traditional radical principles in the Federation's new socialist position.

Other indications of the continued influence of the ideas and concerns of the older radicalism on the Federation after it became a socialist body may be seen in its principal agitation of the latter half of 1883. This was a successful campaign against a well-publicized proposal for state-aided emigration to alleviate the distress of the growing numbers of unemployed; or, as the Federation characterized the plan, a "new method of punishing poverty by transportation for life" advocated by the "bishops and capitalists" of the National Association for the State-Directed Emigration of Labour.[1]

This new emigration scheme was quite similar to the one advocated by a Mansion House committee in early 1882 and defeated by a combination of London ultra-radical groups, although the new plan was more ambitious and called for direct sponsorship and management by the state. The Federation's campaign against this plan was likewise similar in both style and substance to the earlier anti-emigration campaign (most of whose leaders had been members or close associates of the Federation although the organization itself had not been formally involved). Like the groups involved in the earlier campaign, the Federation used essentially the same arguments against emigration that ultra-radicals had used for years, the only real difference being a declaration at one point that its position was that of the "socialist party."[2]

---

1 John E. Williams and the Early History of the Social-Democratic Federation (1886), pp. 8-9.

2 Reynolds's Newspaper, 23 September 1883. For an account of the 1882 anti-emigration protest see Chapter VI above, pp. 206 — 210. Some of the same people took part in both campaigns, most notably Jack Williams, Tom S. Lemon and the Labour Emancipation League led by Joseph Lane.

The Federation's campaign against the proposals of the State-Directed Emigration Association began on the afternoon of the 10th of August, 1883, when a few workingmen agitators slipped unnoticed into a meeting of this dignified body at the Mansion House and caused considerable disruption by bluntly stating their opinion of the proceedings.[1] James Macdonald argued that the remedy for unemployment and poverty lay not in transporting able workers out of the country but in "distributing more justly the enormous wealth which, though produced by working men, was at present monopolised by landlords and capitalists." Jack Williams protested against the holding of the meeting at a time when working men could not ordinarily attend, saying that this suggested "that the gentlemen on the platform thought workingmen were like chessmen, to be shifted about the planet without having any say in the matter." Resolutions on these points proposed by Williams and Macdonald were declared out of order, but their challenge to the Emigration Association to put its case before working-class audiences was evidently accepted. The Association held a number of meetings around London, mainly in the East End, but Williams, Macdonald, James Murray, Hyndman and others from the Federation and the Labour Emancipation League spoke vigorously in opposition to its proposals and carried resolutions against them. Both at these meetings and in a leaflet on the emigration question, the Federation countered the Emigration Association's claim that overpopulation made it a necessity to send thousands of workers abroad with the familiar radical argument that there was plenty of useful work for them to do

---

1 Christian Socialist, September 1883; Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy, p. 54. As Lee points out, their presence was unusual in itself since "in those days such meetings were strictly confined to influential and well-to-do people with a 'stake in the country.'"

at home — in particular, plenty of good agricultural land lying idle if only they could have access to it — and that the answer to the supposed excess of workers was not emigration but "a reasonable scheme of Home Colonisation and State employment of labour at home."[1]

The Federation succeeded in stirring up so much opposition to the Emigration Association's proposals from the very people on whose behalf it claimed to be working that it was soon forced to cease its activities. At an October 1883 meeting at Stepney Hall — the scene a month earlier of the emigrationists' most resounding defeat — the Federation was warmly thanked by members of the Tower Hamlets radical club for "exploding the State-aided emigration scheme."[2] As this suggests, the Federation's protest against the scheme had struck a responsive chord among local radical groups and could hardly have been so successful without their support. The story of this agitation seems, indeed, a good illustration of the Federation's continued closeness to the popular radicalism of its origins. Its new position as a declared socialist body did not necessarily prevent it from working effectively with non-socialist radical groups where common concerns and beliefs were uppermost and the ultimate goals of socialism were not at issue. Although the theoretical and philosophical distinctions between socialists and radicals were becoming increasingly plain from 1883 onward, they still shared a good deal of common ground and continued to co-op-

---

1 Christian Socialist, Lee and Archbold, and J. E. Williams and Early History of SDF, loc. cit.; Justice, 9 August 1884; Reynolds's Newspaper, 23 September 1883. Reynolds's on this date carried a full account of the most important of the East London emigration meetings, held September 17 at Stepney Hall.

2 Christian Socialist, November 1883.

erate frequently on issues in which their common views overshadowed their differences.

One of the most important of these issues, of course, was the land question. As the reader will have noted, the crux of the Federation's anti-emigration argument was the supposed existence of large amounts of cultivable land suitable for "home colonisation." The indications are that most Federation members were still concerned at least as much with land reform as with industrial reform in the 1883-84 period although now, as socialists, they were at pains to point out that nationalization of the land alone was not enough. It has been mentioned earlier that theoretical discussions of the basis and meaning of socialism were becoming more frequent in the Federation's propaganda during this period, but at times its lecturers seemed to be concerned with land nationalization above all else. Admiration for Henry George was still running high, too, as evidenced by the amount of space given over to his views by the editors of the Christian Socialist.

Another way in which the Federation continued to reflect the radical tradition from which it had sprung was in its tendency to view the trade unions -- at least the more established and powerful ones -- as a conservative force, a selfish "aristocracy of labour" which would be "useless" to the cause of social revolution. This tendency is clearly shown in a Christian Socialist leader expressing the journal's disap-

---

1 See, e.g., the lectures mentioned in the Democratic Federation reports in the Christian Socialist, esp. November 1883.

2 On the derivation of the Federation's hostility towards trade-unionism from the Owenite and Chartist traditions as well as more recent ultra-radicalism and Lassallean socialism, see Chapter VI above, pp. 192-3.

proval of the rejection of land nationalization by the 1883 TUC. The article, which closely follows the Federation's attitude toward trade-unionism[1] also suggests the relationship of this attitude to the vigorous campaign on behalf of the unemployed, with its famous Trafalgar Square demonstrations, which brought the Federation into the limelight a few years later. Citing numerous "enthusiastic and crowded meetings" held around the country during and after the TUC in which resolutions for land nationalization and unspecified "other Socialist measures" had been unanimously carried, the Christian Socialist argued that the TUC delegates did not really represent the views of working people in general. If most of the rank and file delegates "were really against nationalisation, and those whom they represent were with them in the matter, what does this mean?" it asked, concluding that

> It means that the 'aristocracy of labour' are unwilling to share the advantages they have gained with the fringe of labour and the pauper classes. It means that the Trade Unions ... have become useless ... and that the social revolution of tomorrow will have to be made by and for the Fifth Estate, the unskilled, unemployed, unorganised labourers [whose] discontent ... will not be apparent ... until they have found a leader whom they can trust.[2]

---

1 On this see Hyndman, The Social Reconstruction of England (1883), p. 7, and Justice, 19 July and 6 September 1884. The Federation remained hostile to the unions until after the rise of the "New Unionism" and the beginnings of the Independent Labour Party. But many individual members, e.g. Tom Mann, James Macdonald and H. H. Champion, came to view this as a mistaken policy much earlier and left the Federation to work for an amalgamation of socialism and the labour movement.

2 Christian Socialist, October 1883. The piece also, however, gives grudging praise to the TUC's resolution on hours of work, expressing surprise that the same assembly which looked askance at land nationalisation should have taken a strong stand on this issue and commenting that "the proposition that a man has a right to fair wages for a fair day's work is even more likely to disturb our society than the declaration that the land belongs to the people."

It was with the immediate needs of this "Fifth Estate" in mind that the Federation, in November 1883, issued a document entitled "State Organization of Unemployed Labour."[1] This contained a number of proposals for relief of the unemployed, most of them based upon the radical ideas of "home colonization" and public works projects which had been used to counter the state-aided emigration scheme. It also urged the shortening of the workday to eight hours for all Government employees (without cutting pay) as a way of creating more jobs.

The chief proposals were that the state should take over the unused or pasture lands judged by "skilled agriculturists" most suitable for cultivation and put to work upon them "such of the unemployed as are accustomed to or would prefer agricultural occupation," and that the rest of the able-bodied unemployed should be organized to undertake useful public works "such as artisans' dwellings, embankment of rivers, construction of canals or aqueducts" and the like. The labourers could either be paid wages "sufficient to keep them and their families in health and comfort" or they could be communally fed and housed at their work locations. Wages and other costs were to be paid jointly by the state and the local authorities, and any profits were to be divided among the workers. For those who could not do heavy labour, the Federation recommended the organization of "light relief works on similar principles" — perhaps clothing manufacture or other crafts, the products of which they could "exchange through the State with the products of those who are at work upon the land." This last suggestion, though

---

[1] The document was bound with new printings of Socialism Made Plain from this time; it was also reprinted in Justice, 23 February 1884 and in Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy, as an appendix.

no details are given, calls to mind the scheme for state-organized markets or "labour exchanges" proposed by Bronterre O'Brien many years earlier.[1]

Although based upon long-standing radical proposals, the Federation's schemes for unemployed relief also reflected its socialist position in that they were to be fully organized, managed and financed by the state and the municipalities and were clearly labeled -- like the earlier "Stepping-Stones" programme -- as temporary palliative measures which could "do little more than help those who are unemployed at the present time": To prevent similar "periods of depression" in the future, the workers themselves (having first achieved the necessary political dominance of the state) would have to "take hold of the machinery of production and distribution" in its entirety and "organize their own work ... for the benefit of the community."

Even the Federation's immediate proposals, calling for direct state supervision and payment of labour as they did, involved much more state action than the radicals of earlier years had usually contemplated. Radical plans for "home colonies," for instance, had included compulsory purchase of land by the state, but generally with the idea of creating independent smallholdings or larger tracts to be worked by self-managed co-operative groups rather than the sort of state-managed collective farms the Federation seems to have had in mind. Charles Bradlaugh's 1869 demand for the compulsory cultivation of waste lands -- "Let all the waste lands fit for cultivation be at once taken by the state, and handed over to the unemployed under con-

---

[1] See Alfred Plummer, Bronterre (1971), pp. 207-210.

ditions enabling them to become cultivators"[1] — sums up the chief aims of most advocates of home colonization and land nationalization at this time.[2] The way in which the Federation took over the radical ideas of an earlier day and modified them to harmonize with its new socialist viewpoint is well illustrated by its positions on the emigration question, the trade unions, land reform and state-organized relief of the unemployed, some of the main issues with which it was concerned in 1883. The same thread of continuity with the older radicalism remained evident in 1884, even as it became more obvious that the Federation represented a distinctly new movement — a new synthesis of the popular radical tradition, the romantic revolt against industrial society personified by William Morris, and Marxian economic doctrine.

From Democratic Federation To SDF: Continuity and Change in 1884

With the commencement of Justice, "the Organ of the Social Democracy," in January 1884, it was clear that an organized socialist movement of national significance now existed in Britain. The Democratic Federation had established itself as the centre of this new movement, a position it would hold unchallenged until the split in its ranks at the end of the year. As the content of the first issue of Justice shows, there was no longer any question within the Federation whether full socialism should be advocated; the debate now was over how it

---

1 Bradlaugh, "Open Letter to Gladstone," National Reformer, 31 October 1867, quoted in E. E. Barry, Nationalisation in British Politics, p. 48.

2 See also Martin J. Boon, Home Colonisation ... a Plan Showing How all the Unemployed Might Have Profitable Work (1869).

could best be achieved. This is particularly evident in the report of a general meeting of all the "friends of organized socialism" held by the Federation on January 11 at Anderton's Hotel in Fleet Street in order to "see how far they were of one mind on the general issues before them."[1]

Besides members of the Federation, the meeting was attended by some Christian Socialist members of the Rev. Stewart Headlam's Guild of St. Matthew, several members of the newly-founded Fabian Society and other socialists and sympathizers of varying shades of opinion.[2] The first order of business was Hyndman's jubilant announcement of the forthcoming publication of Justice, in which he "painted such a picture of the hopes and glorious triumph of Socialism that all those present were determined to make unstinted sacrifices to keep Justice going ahead."[3] But when the discussion turned to questions of political strategy, a serious difference of outlook became apparent which foreshadowed the later controversy and ultimate split between "parliamentary" and "anti-parliamentary" socialists.

---

1 Justice, 19 January 1884.

2 Ibid; Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain, pp. 56-7.

3 James Macdonald in anniversary number of Justice, January 1914, quoted in Lee and Archbold, loc. cit. Hyndman's famed optimism, which in cases like this served to inspire his followers but which could also make him seem unperceptive, was at least partially a pose. By his own account he was not nearly so convinced as he always seemed to be that the Revolution was just around the corner. Once in the Federation's early years when a fellow-member criticized him after an open-air meeting for talking as if the revolution would come in a few years, Hyndman replied "Would you tell them it won't? ... If you did you would throw the movement back at once." Hyndman firmly believed that "no leader of a popular movement, in however small a way, must ever look or speak as if he were in the least discouraged. Should he do so ... there is a marked set-back observable immediately." (Record, p. 341).

The disagreement arose when James Murray proposed a resolution to the effect that political reforms such as universal suffrage, payment of M.P.s and proportional representation were worth working for as steps toward the peaceful establishment of a socialist system even though they should not be regarded as ends in themselves. Champion and Hyndman, in supporting the resolution, emphasized that such reforms would not only aid in securing ameliorative social measures but would help bring about the working class political dominance which was necessary to achieve socialism through Parliamentary action. But others, including Andreas Scheu and Robert Banner, expressed strong distrust of the parliamentary system and opposed any involvement of the movement with ordinary politics, insisting that it should concentrate on direct social agitation. A fiery amendment to the resolution was proposed, stating that the "time for palaver" had passed by, that the working classes must "take matters into their own hands" and that "all means" were justifiable in attaining the ends of a socialist revolution.[1]

The discussion was becoming heated at this point, but Helen Taylor helped to paper over the rift for the time being by asking — to cheers from many of the company — why they should not "work both by parliamentary methods and social agitation."[2] Taking up this theme, Hyndman managed to close the meeting without a division by "taking it as the opinion of those present that the resolution and amendment really represented two sides of the same position."[3] The statement

---

1 Justice, 19 January 1884.

2 Ibid.

3 Lee and Archbold, loc. cit.

of editorial policy which appeared a week later in the first number of Justice seems to reflect this compromise, giving vent to the feelings of the anti-political purists in a vehement denunciation of the "existing Parliamentary system" of "self-seeking ... factions and their time-serving placemen" but not abandoning the policy of working for democratic reforms as a means toward the peaceable attainment of socialist ends through the political process. Socialists, believing that "the people must trust to themselves alone," were "independent of any party or personality," the statement asserted. But a reformed parliamentary system could "help to put an end to the present daily confiscation of labour," it concluded. "For this object only shall we urge such political reforms -- social changes need social action."[1]

Two contrasting themes appear repeatedly in the discussions of radical movements and personalities in the columns of Justice, both in the earliest numbers and on through 1884 and 1885. These may be broadly described as the theme of the parting of the ways between socialism and the older radicalism and the theme of continuity and cooperation between the two.

There had not been a complete break between the socialist Federation and the popular radical milieu. On the one hand, the Federation was now fully conscious of its role as the organizational centre of a new political and social movement, separate and distinct from even the more extreme forms of radicalism, and it seemed to become increasingly aggressive in setting forth the new socialist gospel and attacking radical positions as inadequate. But on the other hand, it still placed

---

[1] "The Principles of Justice," Justice, 19 January 1884.

considerable emphasis on the goals and ideals that were common to both radicals and socialists. The Federation showed a keen awareness of the roots of the new socialism in the popular radical tradition, and it continued to respect and support politically independent advanced radicals, co-operating with them on an ad-hoc basis for common purposes while hoping for their ultimate "conversion" and absorption into the new movement.[1]

A case in point illustrating the Federation's ambivalent attitude toward its radical allies in early 1884 may be found in the comments on Henry George in Justice. In an editorial on "Henry George and the Land Question," H. H. Champion acknowledged that land nationalization "always has, does now, and always will form an essential part of the programme of all socialists," but he warned that it must "go hand-in-hand" with the nationalization of the other means of production or it would be worthless:

> It is because we see clearly that the capitalist's scorpion will not lose its sting when the whip has been taken away from the landlord that we are obliged to denounce the mere confiscation of competition rents as entirely inadequate ... It is easy to say that we must begin somewhere ... But in truth the only way to make a beginning for Socialism is by striking a blow at competition; while the method of Mr. George would leave that principle in unimpaired authority, and even install it more securely in its seat.[2]

---

[1] On socialist-radical co-operation, especially in regard to the "Free Speech" campaigns of 1884 and subsequent years in which the Federation and the metropolitan radical clubs joined together to resist police attempts to suppress outdoor meetings, see Paul Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour (1967), p. 94, and E. Belfort Bax, Reminiscences and Reflexions (1918), p. 76.

[2] Justice, 19 January 1884.

Despite these criticisms, however, Champion still held out the hope "that Mr. George may himself come to see the Land Question from the Socialist standpoint."[1] A review of George's newly-published book Social Problems in a subsequent number of Justice indicates that the Federation did have some reason to believe at this time that George was showing signs of an "advance in the Socialist direction." Now, in addition to the Single Tax on land, he was advocating the nationalization of railways, telephone and telegraph services, gas and water supplies, and, in short "all businesses which are in their nature monopolies." This was still anti-monopolist radicalism rather than socialism, but perhaps "further reading and consideration" would bring George fully into the Socialist camp.[2] And in any case, as William Morris wrote in April 1884, George had won the respect of the socialists by the "winning frankness and genuine sincerity" with which he had addressed the social question in Britain; his writings and speeches had "gone straight to the hearts of his English audiences," and he had been particularly successful in stirring middle-class people to "think of what must be called revolution as both possible and beneficent." Socialists, Morris concluded, "however much and seriously" they differed from George, felt "that his enemies are ours also, and that his end like ours is the winning of a due share of happiness and refinement for the workers of the world."[3]

---

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., 9 February 1884.

3 Ibid., 5 April 1884. For another example of warm praise by the Federation for a non-socialist ally, see the comments on Michael Davitt, "the Irish convict and Irish nationalist whom English audiences now delight to honour" (and also by this time a prominent Georgeist) in the first issue of Justice (19 January 1884).

George and his economic views and the question of land nationalization were still frequent topics for Federation speakers in 1884. Their talks, like the articles cited above, typically offered strong criticisms of the "inadequacy"of Georgeism and other methods of land nationalization along with general praise and support for their advocates. In February, for instance, James Murray was lecturing on the topic "Labour Emancipation something more than Land Nationalisation" and Herbert Burrows on "The Aims of the English Socialists, with a Criticism of Henry George's views on Capital."[1] About the same time Helen Taylor, after a lecture to the Eleusis Club in Chelsea in which she concentrated mainly on the development of private property in land and the need for nationalization, said that "she wished it to be distinctly understood that Land Nationalisation was only a part of Socialism. She was a Socialist first and a Land Nationaliser afterwards."[2] Similarly, at a Henry George meeting in Shoreditch about two months later at which Taylor proposed the vote of thanks for George's address and warmly praised his unselfish motives, she made a point of saying "I am a Land Nationaliser, but I am also proud to proclaim myself a Socialist."[3]

---

1 Lecture Diary, Justice, 2 February 1884.

2 Justice, 2 February 1884. Taylor evidently was invited to speak at the club by the rank-and-file members over the objections of the political committee, who had engineered the club's "active part in supporting the coercion policy of the present Ministry" and so disliked Taylor's views that they had passed a resolution formally barring her from the club.

3 Ibid., 5 April 1884. It was at this meeting, incidentally, that the Land Reform Union (which has been discussed above) announced that it was now becoming the English Land Restoration League, a more definitely Georgeist body. Taylor was a prominent member of this group.

The meetings reports columns of Justice contain many good illustrations of the way in which Federation members were vigorously promoting socialism in the metropolitan radical clubs and defending it against all opponents. One of the best of these examples of the parting of the ways between socialism and radicalism that was now in rapid progress is the coverage of a continuing debate on the validity of socialism at the Southwark Radical Club between F. W. Soutter, the former Radical editor,[1] and an anti-socialist club member calling himself "Semper Eadem."

The debate started on 10 February 1884 when "Semper Eadem" challenged Soutter to "champion the principles of the Society to which he belonged" and its organ Justice. Soutter began by arguing that Individualism as the reigning social philosophy had clearly failed to achieve "the glorious results which its friends claim it is capable of achieving" -- results which Soutter said had only been possible, if at all, in the times "before the introduction of machinery and the advance of science had revolutionized the whole system of production." Claiming as the Fabians so often did later (and as all socialists did as a way of scoring debating points) that the advance toward socialism had already begun and that "every piece of legislation that benefited the people was socialistic in character," Soutter cited as examples the Education Act, the Merchant Shipping Act, and "the laws relating to the sanitary arrangements of dwellings." Taking a practical-socialist line, he called it "absurd ... to put forward a scheme of a perfect

---

[1] Detailed reports of two of the three club meetings devoted to this debate may be found in the Justice numbers of 16 February and 1 March 1884. These reports are the ones cited earlier as evidence that Soutter was still a member of the Federation at this time and considered himself a socialist.

state of society" as his opponent had challenged him to do. "What we have first to do," said Soutter,

> is to show the evils of modern society, to discover the causes of those evils, and then, having shown the necessity of wider and closer organisation, and the substitution of collective for individual aims, to work on those lines and toward that end by getting hold of the means of production.[1]

When the debate was continued at a second club meeting, Soutter illustrated "the utter failure of the present system" by reading extracts from the newly-published Historical Basis of Socialism by Hyndman and Morris which dealt with the present "fearful condition of large masses of the people, their bad housing, low morality, etc." Soutter concluded that "the system stood condemned," that it was the duty of reformers to try to build a better one, and that this could only be done "by preventing individuals from trading in the flesh and blood of their fellows." When his opponent cited the arguments of Mill and Bradlaugh that socialism would destroy individual character and initiative, Soutter replied that even "Mr. Fawcett, that bourgeois economist and champion of commercialism, had stated that the present system afforded no opportunity for the development of the individual."[2]

As Justice did not report on the third and final debate between Soutter and "Semper Eadem," it is not clear which of them was considered to have made the better case by the audience at the Southwark Radical Club. The general impression given by the reports cited,

---

1 Justice, 16 February 1884.

2 Ibid., 1 March 1884.

however, is that the members were fairly evenly divided on the question of socialism, some willing to consider accepting it and some not.

Another typical report of the Federation's proselytising on behalf of socialism among radical workingmen describes Hyndman and Soutter speaking at an outdoor meeting in Southwark Park in May, 1884. Hyndman, whose "text was the now familiar one of "Socialism," was the main speaker; after explaining the general views and objects of socialists he outlined the Federation's "stepping stones" programme. In the course of debating with two in the audience who argued against socialism, partly because they thought it would "require a violent revolution," Hyndman "proclaimed himself a Social Revolutionist," saying that a social revolution would be necessary even to bring about some of the "palliative" reforms he had just described. Soutter then spoke in support of Hyndman and "as a skilled labourer" begged his fellows in the same position to "make common cause with their unskilled brethren." Soutter also urged them to support Harry Quelch, who was then standing for election as a vestryman in Bermondsey, identifying him as a "socialist and member of the Executive Committee of the Democratic Federation." The report concludes with the comment that the socialist movement was "evidently taking root in Southwark," but was handicapped by the "want of organization" of socialist sentiment there.[1]

A strike by workers in the mills at Blackburn, Lancs., in early 1884 occasioned what seems to have been the Federation's first intervention in a labour dispute. Jack Williams, James Macdonald and J. L. Joynes were sent to Blackburn for several weeks to offer encouragement

---

1 Ibid., 17 May 1884.

and support to the strikers as well as to "point out to them that a far wider combination than mere Trade Unionism is essential to their interests."[1] They succeeded in forming a local branch of the Federation, which was represented at the 1884 annual conference in early August. Its formation was cited in the report of the Executive to the conference as an example of "the great importance of always taking advantage of such disputes to bring the truths of socialism before the workers."[2] As its response to the Blackburn strike indicates, the Federation was well aware of the propaganda possibilities of such an event despite its low opinion of the revolutionary value of "mere" trade unionism.[3]

As far as opponents of socialism were concerned, perhaps the most formidable of these with whom the Federation had to deal in the spring of 1884 was Charles Bradlaugh. Bradlaugh's position as one of the most influential shapers of popular radical opinion made his "continuous opposition to socialism" at this time[4] both a challenge that

---

1 Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy, p. 59; Justice, 9 August 1884.

2 Justice, loc. cit.

3 This disdain for trade unionism was probably stronger in Hyndman than in many of the Federation's rank-and-file members. Some of the members (e.g. Tom Mann and H. H. Champion, as noted earlier in this chapter) took quite the opposite view to Hyndman's on the need for a socialist alliance with the unions, and even loyal hyndmanites did not always seem to share Hyndman's attitudes in this regard. Harry Quelch, for instance, not only took part in all Federation activities as well as editing Justice, but (according to Belfort Bax) worked "equally hard on the industrial side of the working-class movement" as a trade-union organizer, participant in TUCs and labour spokesman at the hearings of the Royal Commission on labour in the early nineties (see Bax's introduction to Quelch, Literary Remains, 1914, p. 15).

4 Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy, pp. 60-61. (Bradlaugh's apparent hostility toward the Federation even in its early, non-socialist days has also been discussed in Ch. VI above, pp. 220-22, and Ch. VII, p. 248; 250.

had to be answered and an excellent propaganda opportunity. Bradlaugh's long-standing antipathy toward the Federation had become more intense and outspoken after the January socialist meeting at Anderton's Hotel discussed above; his National Reformer had taken the amendment moved by the "anti-parliamentary" faction as "evidence that the Socialists were prepared to use arson and murder to achieve their ends." and Bradlaugh himself had begun a series of anti-socialist addresses at the National Secular Society's Hall of Science.[1] The Federation executive, choosing Hyndman as its champion, challenged Bradlaugh to meet him in public debate. This debate, held 17 April 1884 at St. James's Hall in Piccadilly under the title "Will Socialism Benefit the English People?" was a major landmark in the parting of the ways between socialism and radicalism -- an unmistakable public confirmation that the formerly more-or-less undifferentiated London political Left had divided into two quite distinct camps.

The debate -- a verbatim report of which was published in Justice two days after it took place[2] -- showed Bradlaugh still at the height of his fame and influence, and his power as an orator. No one, including Hyndman himself, really expected him to "win" a debate against such an opponent[3] (especially before an audience composed largely of loyal Bradlaugh supporters), and all observers seem to agree that Bradlaugh technically scored the higher. But the real object of Hyndman and the Federation was to present, in Hyndman's opening half-hour speech, "a state-

---

1 Ibid., pp. 57-58.

2 The Federation also published it separately as a pamphlet, which may be seen at Goldsmith's Library, University of London.

3 Hyndman, Record, p. 337.

ment of the meaning and objects of Socialism which people would easily read"[1] in circumstances which would obtain for it the maximum possible attention from radicals and secularists all around the country whose minds might be open to socialist arguments.

In this sense the Federation considered the debate an unqualified success. "The mere occurrence of this Debate," Justice editorialized immediately afterwards, "apart from the significant fact that St. James's Hall was crowded from floor to ceiling, is an indication ... that the collectivist ideal, in the opinion of its opponents, is displacing current ideals" to the extent that it must be actively opposed; but the new ideal was bound to "gain by every opportunity for a clear statement of Socialist principles and aims."[2] In the following months, as Harry Lee recalled, the debate was "discussed at Radical Clubs and branches of the National Secular Society, in the provinces as well as in London, where little might otherwise have been said about Socialism and the Democratic Federation."[3] This brought valuable publicity and new recruits to the socialist cause -- including such prominent NSS members as Annie Besant and Edward Aveling -- even though much of the discussion was hostile to socialism.[4] Some of the new recruits from the secularist and radical ranks like J. Hunter Watts, who wrote later that listening to the Hyndman-Bradlaugh debate had put the "finishing touch" to a conversion which had come about gradually over several years as his "faith in mere political

---

1 Ibid., p. 338.

2 Justice, 19 April 1884.

3 Lee and Archbold, Social-Democracy, p. 62.

4 Ibid.; Hyndman, loc. cit.

Republicanism was being weakened,"[1] were already leaning toward socialism by 1884. Although Bradlaugh technically won the debate and his supporters still vastly outnumbered those of Hyndman and the new socialism, this event seems to have foreshadowed the subsequent rapid decline of the secularist movement and the gradual replacement of secularist radicalism by socialism as the "typical creed of the politically active working class" which Paul Thompson has noted as a characteristic feature of the post-1885 period in London politics.[2]

Another sign of the widening gap between radicalism and the new socialism, far less dramatic than the Hyndman-Bradlaugh debate but still noteworthy, was the departure of Helen Taylor from the Federation in the summer of 1884 after a quarrel with Hyndman. One suspects that two such strong-willed, dominant individuals occupying prominent positions in the same organization would be likely to come into conflict purely for psychological reasons, but the Hyndman-Taylor dispute sprang at least partially from genuine differences in attitude toward the conduct of the new socialist agitation and its relationship to the older radicalism.

As noted earlier, even though Taylor proclaimed herself a socialist and participated as enthusiastically in the Federation after its turn to Marxism as she had done before, she seemed uninterested in theory and kept her "socialist" agitation on a practical, non-doctrinaire level.[3] She was steeped in the utilitarian radicalism of J. S. Mill, and her presence in the Democratic Federation has been described

---

1 Watts, "How I Became a Socialist," Justice, 7 July 1894.

2 Paul Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour: the Struggle for London (1967), p. 110.

3 See Chapter VI above, pp. 230-31.

as a sign of the early socialist movement's "continuity with the utilitarian tradition."[1] The Helen Taylor materials in the Mill-Taylor Collection strongly support this observation, indicating that Taylor maintained unbroken ties with all sorts of radical movements and organizations during her association with the Federation, and that her popularity in radical-club circles was little affected by her advocacy of socialism on behalf of the Federation.[2]

By mid-1884 Taylor was evidently complaining openly about Hyndman's methods of conducting the Federation, finding his socialism too doctrinaire and his leadership too dictatorial. She was further angered by his insistence that she give up other activities and concentrate her full energies on the work of the Federation. Hyndman, in a letter which rather arrogantly dismissed the possibility of any valid complaints against his leadership, professed himself "surprised and annoyed that you should waste your time, energy and money on what you know, as well as I do, are mere trifling movements, when the great cause of socialism called for all and more than all you could possibly do," and lectured her on her "duty" to work with "people who know where they are going and base their actions on clear principles." Taylor answered this with accusations of "moral blindness," "secret methods" and un-socialist arrogance on Hyndman's part which made it impossible for her to tolerate any longer

---

1 Stanley Pierson, Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism (Ithica, N. Y., and London, 1973), p. 62.

2 e.g., she was strongly urged by the Camberwell Radical Club, of which she had been made President, to undertake her 1885 candidacy for Parliament; during her campaign she continued to advocate essentially the same measures she had supported as a member of the Federation, but without the "socialist" label (Mill-Taylor Coll., Vol. XVIII, and Box VII, Item 66).

his "bad methods of doing what is meant for good work."[1]

With this parting shot Taylor withdrew from the Federation -- partly, no doubt, because of the personal bitterness between herself and Hyndman, but also because she was not prepared to accept a kind of socialism which was fully distinct and separate from non-socialist radicalism. Regarded from this latter viewpoint, Taylor's departure seems to conveniently mark the final stage in the Federation's movement toward a full and exclusive commitment to socialism. Taylor considered herself a socialist (as her reply to Hyndman makes quite clear), but she did not wish to break her connections with non-socialist causes and organizations and pursue a narrowly focused agitation for socialism and nothing but socialism. Her interests -- e.g., in the advancement of women and in her School Board work -- were too broad for this. She seems to have remained essentially a radical, and may be seen as one of the last of the original radical members to withdraw from the Federation as its orientation changed.

It should perhaps be stressed again in this connection, however, that the Federation as a whole still did not make a complete, sharp break with the non-socialist radical milieu as Hyndman seems to have wished Taylor to do. The thread of continuity between radicalism and socialism remained evident in the pages of Justice; the lecture notices and meetings reports, as well as some of the editorial comment, make this clear.

Individual members often kept up their connections outside socialist circles. One prominent member who exemplifies this well is

---

1 Hyndman to Taylor, 25 July 1884, and Taylor's undated draft reply, Ibid., Vol. XVIII.

Herbert Burrows. Like Helen Taylor he was a foundation member of the Federation who moved with it from radicalism to socialism, but seems to have taken a relatively practical, non-doctrinaire approach to the latter and to have maintained close connections with the world of the workingmen's radical clubs. A brief biographical sketch of Burrows, published in 1908 when he was standing for election to Parliament as a "socialist and trade unionist candidate" includes the revealing comment that although Burrows had worked "heartily and loyally with the members of the SDF for more than a quarter of a century," he had done so "while never -- as some of us would have wished -- cutting himself adrift entirely from his old Radical surroundings."[1]

Burrows, then, like Taylor, did not confine his activities to the socialist movement. Like her, he seems to have been especially interested in the Irish cause; the pamphlet specifically confirms his continuing pro-Irish activity through the 'eighties in speaking of his "never forgetting to help Ireland and the Irish in their agrarian and Home Rule propaganda, whenever and wherever possible," at the same time he was serving the new socialist movement as "one of its most active and valuable speakers and writers."[2] From the mid-eighties onward, Burrows also "devoted himself assiduously" to trade-union organizing and the women's movement -- and, again like Taylor, was closely involved in the management of the Board Schools -- above and beyond his work with the Federation. Perhaps Hyndman and the Federation tolerated this

---

1 Social-Democratic Federation, Brief Sketch of the Life of Herbert Burrows, (Haggerston, 1908), p. 3.

2 Ibid., p. 6.

wide range of outside activities more readily in Burrow's case because his position as a civil servant (with the Inland Revenue) made it necessary for him to avoid being too closely associated publicly with overt revolutionary agitation.[1]

Also among those in the Federation who kept up independent contacts with the radical-club world and pursued interests which went beyond the range of strictly "socialist" propaganda were Charles and James Murray and others of the old O'Brienite group which, as indicated earlier, was a living link between Chartism and Socialism. Although they had been some of the Federation's most loyal supporters from the outset, they continued their own independent organization, the Manhood Suffrage League, kept alive the memory of Bronterre O'Brien and taught his doctrines along with those of the new socialism until old age began to take its toll of them toward the end of the eighties. Their names appear regularly in the Justice "lecture diary" and the columns devoted to reports of meetings; one such item bills Charles Murray as lecturing for the Federation on the typically O'Brienite themes of "Land, Credit, Currency, and Equitable Exchange"[2] — a talk which no doubt ranged from the nationalization of land and the banks to the replacement of the existing currency with something like the paper "labour notes" O'Brien had proposed. The kind of mixture of O'Brienism and socialism which was embraced by the Murray brothers and their circle is suggested by a report of a talk by James Murray at the Bethnal Green branch of the

---

1 Also, the tone of Burrows' Justice articles and public lectures suggests that he was of a more diplomatic and tactful nature than Taylor and thus perhaps more able to work in his own way without coming into conflict with Hyndman.

2 Justice "Lecture Diary," 26 April 1884.

Labour Emancipation League in September, 1884. On this occasion Murray explained O'Brien's religious views. Originally a Roman Catholic, as were the Murrays also, O'Brien had rejected "everything supernatural," but had considered Jesus "the greatest philosophical seer in history." O'Brien -- and Murray likewise -- believed that most of Jesus's teachings were, as Murray put it, "explicable in a purely socialist and secular ... sense."[1]

Concern over the declining role of agriculture as compared with industry in the national economy, a major theme of radical agitation for many years before the emergence of socialism, was reflected by Charles Murray at another September, 1884 meeting. Murray and R.P.B. Frost were jointly addressing the Federation's new Victoria Park branch on measures for the relief of the unemployed; Murray placed particular emphasis on the old radical idea of "Home Colonization," describing it as a "grave necessity," not only because it was needed to relieve unemployment but because of "the danger this country was exposed to by being dependent on foreigners for our food."[2] Murray's expression of fear for Britain's future because of the drift away from agricultural self-sufficiency probably would have brought an approving response from many of his audience whether they considered themselves socialists or not, for it tied in with the whole general topic of land reform as a means to both social justice and agricultural revival -- one of the most prominent public concerns of the period both before and after the emergence of socialism.

---

[1] Justice, 13 September 1884. Emphasis mine.

[2] Ibid.

Another instance of the continuing involvement of Federation members with causes that predated the socialist movement and appealed to both socialists and non-socialists may be found in a report on the February 1884 meeting which resulted in the establishment of the branch at Victoria Park. This was a meeting of East London working men who were "sympathizers with the objects and aims of the Democratic Federation," including several who "had taken active part in the Chartist movement of '48." Apparently all the items in the Federation's programme, both "Social and Political," were discussed, but -- perhaps because of the leaven of old chartists present -- the audience seemed especially interested in the proposal for "the abolition of the National Debt."[1]

The demand for repudiation of the Debt as an unfair burden on working people had been a hallmark of ultra-radicalism long before the rise of socialism; it had been a prominent feature, for instance, of the agitation of the O'Brienites and of the ex-Chartist pioneer socialist John Sketchley. Opposition to the National Debt was closely related to the traditional radical dislike of militarism and imperialism, as is shown by the discussion in the opening pages of Sketchley's 1879 pamphlet The Principles of Social Democracy: As Sketchley pointed out, military aggression was costly not only to the victims of it but to the people of the aggressor nation, because of the vast public debt to usurious "fundholders" incurred by a war-making government. At the Federation's 1884 Victoria Park meeting, likewise, the discussion proceeded from the National Debt to militarism -- specifically to an "emphatic" condemnation (in language which itself reflected the style

---

[1] Justice, 9 February 1884.

of the older radicals) of the Liberal Government's recent military adventure in Egypt and the "userers and International bondholders" who benefited from it.[1]

Along with such instances of a seemingly unconscious carryover of some of the typical themes of earlier radical agitation into the new socialist propaganda, one also finds indications in Justice for 1884 that the now-socialist Federation was still strongly aware, and proud, of its radical heritage. One leading article by R.P.B. Frost[2] shows especially well the Federation's consciousness of the long continuity of basic socialist ideas within the popular radical tradition and the conviction of the members that they were "continuing the work" of earlier generations of Chartists and radicals. Frost's main purpose was to refute the charge frequently made by opponents of socialism that it was strictly a continental doctrine, a "foreign" philosophy unknown and unsuited to Englishmen. Frost argued, on the contrary, that much of the spirit and outlook of the newly-established socialist movement had already existed in the working-class radicalism of earlier generations. Many champions of the working-class cause in the first half of the nineteenth century, such as Cobbett, Feargus O'Connor, Bronterre O'Brien, Ernest Jones and other lesser-known agitators, had seen "as clearly as Socialists do to-day the causes of the evils which then as now oppressed the working classes," and, it seemed to Frost, had really been socialists "in spirit" if not in name.

---

1 Ibid.

2 "Socialism in '34," Ibid., 19 April 1884.

By way of illustration Frost included a long extract chosen "at random" from a radical paper published fifty years before Justice was started. The theme of the extract, which ran in part as follows, was the inadequacy of piecemeal reforms so long as the existing "cannibal system" should endure:

> As long as the labourer's existence depends on the capital of others, and there are more Labourers in the country than the capitalists want to use, so long must he continue a pauper slave ... To the labourer what matters it, whether the fruits of his toil are usurped by the person under the name of tithe or by the landlord and capitalist under those of rent and profits? ... The truth is rent and profits are as much a tax on industry as tithes or the malt tax or any other impost. They are all so many subtractions from the wages of labour -- all part and parcel of the same cannibal system which sacrifices the many to the avarice and ambition of the few. It is therefore the whole system we have to attack.[1]

This writer's plan of attack called for the strengthening of trade unionism and a concerted drive for higher wages and reduced hours of labour "because these include every reform we want." As was usually the case before the rise of modern socialism, his reform proposals were less comprehensive and less socialistic in tone than his analysis of the "system." Frost recognized this, commenting that "Trades' Unions have failed to accomplish all that was expected of them" and that it was now recognized by socialists "that the upset of the competitive system cannot be brought about only by raising wages."[2] Nevertheless, Frost was

---

[1] People's Guardian, 22 February 1834, quoted ibid.

[2] Ibid.

struck by the similarities between this 1834 analysis of the economic system and that on which the new socialist movement of his own day was founded: "The fundamental basis of socialism was clearly seen, that competition among the workers, the means of production being in the hands of [another] class, must mean starvation wages on the average." The existence of such similarities of basic outlook was proof enough, Frost concluded, that the essentials of socialism were "no recent importation" but "native to the soil of England," and that the "socialists of 1884 were but continuing the work which has been handed on from previous generations."[1]

By the mid-summer of 1884, as the time of the Democratic Federation's annual conference approached, Hyndman and the Federation as a whole had reached a high point of confidence and enthusiasm. Never again, recalled Hyndman, "did things look so bright for our propaganda as they did in the summer and early autumn of 1884."[2] The mood of excitement is easily seen in the pages of the Justice numbers published in this period, especially the August 9 issue in which the conference was reported. At this conference — apparently largely on the initiative of the Labour Emancipation League, which now formally joined forces with the Federation — the final steps were taken confirming the organization's public identity as a definite socialist body. A general statement of socialist principles was for the first time added to the official

---

1 Ibid.

2 Hyndman, Record, pp. 345-6. Hyndman gives here a list of the principal speakers who were agitating up and down the country on behalf of the Federation at this time — many of the most brilliant of whom, like Morris, Champion or Annie Besant, would later desert it for various reasons.

programme, and the name of the organization was changed from "Democratic Federation" to "Social Democratic Federation."[1]

The strong influence of the LEL at this time may be seen in the adoption "without dissent" of a proposal by Joseph Lane and John Sketchley — quite at variance with the SDF's actual practice later — 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." Lane and his group did not succeed in their efforts to get the LEL programme in its entirety adopted as the new official programme of the SDF, but the new statement of principles was made deliberately brief and vague, obviously to keep the developing rift between the "parliamentary" or "political" socialists and the "anti-political" purists like Lane's group papered over for the time being.[2]

For the moment this sort of compromise was still enough to keep these very different kinds of socialists under one organizational roof. The predominant mood at the time of the conference seems to have been the hopeful and enthusiastic outlook reflected by William Morris in his *Justice* leader written to accompany the conference report.[3] It would

---

1 *Justice*, 9 August 1884. The new title was proposed by Jack Williams and Herbert Burrows as an alternative to "Democratic Federation and Labour Emancipation League," which was rejected as too unwieldy and pedestrian.

2 *Ibid*. For an indication of the extent to which this division was now becoming apparent within the socialist movement, see the letter from "A Collectivist" in *Justice* for 26 April 1884, written in reaction to the letter from William Harrison Riley, the O'Brienite editor of the old *International Herald*, which was referred to in Chapter VI above, p. 198. "Collectivist" dismissed Riley as an "anarchist" whose talk of the abolition of all central governments in favour of voluntary, autonomous communes was under current conditions "arrant nonsense."

3 "Socialism in England in 1884," *Justice*, 9 August 1884.

seem appropriate to conclude the present account of the earliest years of the Social-Democratic Federation with some excerpts from this article, since Morris here touched upon some of the main developments with which this thesis has been concerned and came to similar conclusions about them.

Looking back upon the circumstances of 1881 and attempting to assess their relationship to the rise of the socialist movement of 1884, Morris concluded that an unconscious, unformed socialism had already existed at the beginning of the eighties -- contrary to appearances -- and that its emergence in definite, organized form over the next few years was principally due to the particular political circumstances of the period and the way in which the Democratic Federation and allied bodies had developed in reaction to them.

Although socialist ideas were beginning to be explicitly discussed here and there on the London radical scene by 1881, as emphasized in this thesis, Morris was probably right in saying that at this time "anyone who had predicted the new birth of socialism in England would have been looked upon as a dreamer, if not crazy." The outlook then for those who had the greatest faith in the possibilities for human and social progress, he continued,

> seemed to be nothing better than a dreary waste of perpetual Whig-Liberal rule, feeble and pedantic, except where coercion was dealt out with a liberal hand to the Irish ... [an] outlook only relieved by the helpless grumblings of a few radicals who really meant what they had said while the Tories were still in power, and a still fewer irreconcilables, who were at heart Socialists.

> That the outlook is now so different may be partly due to the disappointment caused by the cool way in which the Liberal leaders swallowed all their promises ... But though this disappointment might have taken some men out of the Liberal camp, it would have but landed them as disgusted non-politicals, if there had not been forming another party for them to join in which they might be actively useful; Socialism was not dead in England in spite of all appearances to the contrary ---[1]

Morris believed that the Federation, having set out initially to organise a new and completely independent movement to champion "the rights of the people," was inexorably led both by the new currents of social thought that were stirring and the growing consciousness of the limitations of conventional politics toward "a direct declaration of adhesion to the principles of socialism." Even in its earliest years, as Morris noted, socialist principles had been implicitly embodied in the Federation's "outspoken" and "courageous" public agitations. It was in large measure due to the Federation's work, he concluded, that socialism had become a living movement in Britain, offering a real hope for the future, instead of merely the theory of "a school of cultivated thinkers only, to whom the social revolution would have been but a happy dream."[2]

---

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Place of publication of all items except scholarly periodicals is London unless stated otherwise

I. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Letters to Joseph Lane, John Burns Papers, British Museum (Add. MSS 46345)

Helen Taylor Correspondence (including newscuttings and miscellaneous papers), Mill-Taylor Collection, British Library of Political and Economic Science

Webb Trade Union Collection, British Library of Political and Economic Science

E. S. Beesly Papers, W. H. Davison Library, University College London

II. NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

(Dates are given for several short-lived publications to distinguish them from others of the same title)

Bee-Hive

Christian Socialist

Contemporary Review

Daily News

The Democrat

DeMorgan's Monthly

The Echo

The Englishman (1874-86)

Fortnightly Review

International Herald

Irish World (New York)

Justice

Labour Standard

Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper

National Reformer

Nineteenth Century

Quarterly Review

The Radical (1880-82)

The Republican (1870-72)

The Republican (1879-86)

Republican Chronicle (1875)

Reynolds's Newspaper

South London Press

To-Day

The Times

Weekly Dispatch

III. CONTEMPORARY BOOKS, ARTICLES, PAMPHLETS, ETC.

Address of the Land and Labour League to the Working Men and Women of Great Britain and Ireland (1869), reprinted in Rev. C. M. Davies, Heterodox London (1874).

Arnold, Matthew, "The Future of Liberalism," Nineteenth Century, Vol. VIII (July 1880) pp. 1-18.

Boon, Martin J., Home Colonization: Including a Plan showing how All the Unemployed might have Profitable Work, and thus prevent War, Pauperism, and Crime (1869).

Cunningham, Rev. William, "The Progress of Socialism in England," Contemporary Review Vol. XXXIV (Jan. 1879) pp. 245-260.

Davies, Rev. Charles Maurice, Heterodox London: or, Phases of Free Thought in the Metropolis (1874).

Hyndman, H. M., The Coming Revolution in England (1883; first published in North American Review, 1883).

_____, "The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch," Nineteenth Century, Vol. IX (Jan. 1881), pp. 1-18.

_____, "The Radicals and Socialism," Nineteenth Century, Vol. XVIII (November 1885) pp. 833-840.

_____, "The Revolution of Today," To-Day, N. S. Vol. I (Jan. 1884).

_____, The Social Reconstruction of England (1883; first published in International Review, Spring 1883).

_____, and Henry George, "Socialism and Rent-Appropriation: a Dialogue," Nineteenth Century Vol. XVII (Feb. 1885) pp. 369-380.

Joynes, J. L., The Adventures of a Tourist in Ireland (1882).

Manifesto to the Working Men of the World. Issued by the Social Democratic Associations in London, July 1883. Reprinted in Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, No. 14 (Spring 1967).

Marx, Karl, The Civil War in France (1871), reprinted in Marx, The Paris Commune 1871, ed. Christopher Hitchens (1971).

McCarthy, Justin, "Ireland in '48 and Ireland Now," Nineteenth Century, Vol. VIII (December 1880).

Mearns, Andrew, The Bitter Cry of Outcast London (1883), reprinted with other pamphlets under same title and with introduction by Anthony S. Wohl, Leicester, 1970.

Mill, John Stuart, "Chapters on Socialism," Fortnightly Review, Vol. XXV (1879), pp. 217-237; 373-382; 513-530.

Murray, Charles, A Letter to Mr. George Jacob Holyoake (1854).

O'Brien, Bronterre, Address to the Second Co-operative Congress, in Proceedings of the Second Co-operative Congress, Held in Birmingham ... 1831, pp. 18-21.

_____, State Socialism!! (1850), reprinted with O'Brien's address "For What are we Striving?" and the "Propositions of the National Reform League for the Peaceful Regeneration of Society" (c. 1880).

O'Brien, Miss Charlotte G., "The Irish 'Poor Man'," Nineteenth Century, Vol. VIII (Dec. 1880), pp. 876-887.

Peek, Francis, "Lazarus at the Gate," Contemporary Review, Vol. XLV (Jan. 1884) pp. 81-96.

Rae, John, "Social Philosophy," Contemporary Review, Vol. XLV (Feb. 1884) pp. 295-300.

Report of the Land Nationalisation Society (1st Report, 1881-3; 2d Report, 1883-4; 3d Report, 1884-5).

St. Clair, Silvester, Sketch of the Life and Labours of Jno. DeMorgan, Orator, Elocutionist and Tribune of the People (Leeds, 1880).

Sketchley, John, The Principles of Social Democracy: an Exposition and a Vindication (1879).

Social-Democratic Federation, Brief Sketch of the Life of Herbert Burrows (Haggerston, 1908).

_____, The Condition of Ireland (1881).

_____, John E. Williams and the Early History of the Social-Democratic Federation (1886).

_____, Socialism Made Plain (June 1883).

_____, State Organisation of Unemployed Labour as an Alternative to the Harmful Scheme of State-Aided Emigration (Nov. 1883; bound with new editions of Socialism Made Plain from this time. Also reprinted in H. W. Lee and E. Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain [1935]).

"Socialism in England," Quarterly Review, Vol. CLVI (1883) pp. 353-393.

IV. MEMOIRS AND REMINISCENCES

Bax, E. Belfort, Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Mid and Late Victorian (1918).

Beer, Max, Fifty Years of International Socialism (1935).

Carpenter, Edward, My Days and Dreams (3rd Ed., 1921).

Clark, G. B., "The International: Recollections," Socialist Review Vol. XII (July-Sept. 1914) pp. 249-255.

Davidson, J. Morrison, The Annals of Toil (1899).

Hyndman, H. M., The Record of an Adventurous Life (1911).

_____, et. al., How I Became a Socialist (c. 1896; collected memoirs reprinted from Justice).

Kitz, Frank, "Recollections and Reflections," Freedom, Jan. - July 1912.

Mann, Tom, Tom Mann's Memoirs (1923).

Soutter, F. W., Recollections of a Labour Pioneer (1923).

V. SELECTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTS, LETTERS, ETC.

Harrison, Royden, ed., The English Defence of the Commune, 1871 (1971).

Hobsbawm, E. J., ed., Labour's Turning Point (1948).

Marx, Karl, The Paris Commune 1871, ed. Christopher Hitchens (1971).

_____, and F. Engels, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels on Britain (Moscow, 1953).

Quelch, Harry, Literary Remains, ed. E. Belfort Bax (1914).

VI. SECONDARY AUTHORITIES

Altick, Richard D., The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900 (Chicago, 1957).

Armytage, W. H. G., Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1560-1960 (1961).

_____, "Ruskin as Utopist," Notes and Queries (May 1956) pp. 219-224.

Barry, E. Eldon, Nationalisation in British Politics: the Historical Background (1965).

Beer, Max, A History of British Socialism, Vol. II (1920).

Bellamy, Joyce M., and John Saville, eds., Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol. I (1972).

Briggs, Asa, Victorian People (1954).

_____, and John Saville, eds., Essays in Labour History (1960).

Brophy, Jacqueline, "Bibliography of British Labor and Radical Journals, 1880-1914," Labor History (New York), Vol. III (1962) pp. 103-126.

Clark, G. Kitson, The Making of Victorian England (1962).

Clayton, Joseph, The Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain 1884-1924 (1926).

Clements, R. V., "British Trade Unions and Popular Political Economy, 1850-1875," Economic History Review, 2d ser., Vol. XIV (1961-62) pp. 93-104.

Cole, G. D. H., A Short History of the British Working-Class Movement, 1789-1937 (3 vols., 1937).

Collins, Henry, "The English Branches of the First International," in Asa Briggs and John Saville, eds., Essays in Labour History (1960) pp. 242-275.

_____, "The Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation," in Asa Briggs and John Saville, eds., Essays in Labour History 1886-1923 (1971) pp. 47-69.

_____, and Chimen Abramsky, Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement: Years of the First International (1965).

Cominos, Peter T., "Late-Victorian Sexual Respectability and the Social System," International Review of Social History, Vol. VIII (1963).

Crowley, D. W., "The Origins of the Revolt of the British Labour Movement from Liberalism, 1875-1906" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1952).

Garvin, J. L., The Life of Joseph Chamberlain (2 Vols., 1932).

Hamer, D. A., Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery: a Study in Leadership and Policy (Oxford, 1972).

Hammond, J. L., Gladstone and the Irish Nation (1938).

Harrison, Brian, and Patricia Hollis, "Chartism, Liberalism and the Life of Robert Lowery," English Historical Review Vol. LXXXII (1967) pp. 503-535.

Harrison, Brian, "Teetotal Chartism," History Vol. LVIII (1973) pp. 193-217.

Harrison, J. F. C., Learning and Living: a Study in the History of the English Adult Education Movement (1961).

Harrison, Royden, Before the Socialists: Studies in Labour and Politics, 1861-1881 (1965).

Heyck, T. W., The Dimensions of British Radicalism: the Case of Ireland 1874-95 (Chicago, 1974).

Hobsbawm, E. J., "The Labour Aristocracy," in John Saville, ed., Democracy and the Labour Movement: Essays in Honour of Dona Torr (1954).

_____, Labouring Men (1964).

Hutchinson, T. W., A Review of Economic Doctrines, 1870-1929 (Oxford, 1953).

Jones, Gareth Stedman, Outcast London (Oxford, 1971).

Jones, Peter d'Alroy, The Christian Socialist Revival 1877-1914 (Princeton, N. J., 1968).

Kent, William, John Burns: Labour's Lost Leader (1950).

Lee, H. W., and E. Archbold, Social-Democracy in Britain (1935).

"The Labour Party and the Books that Helped to Make It," Review of Reviews, Vol. XXXIII (June 1906) pp. 568-582.

Lawrence, E. P., Henry George in the British Isles (East Lansing, Michigan 1957).

_____, "Uneasy Alliance: the Reception of Henry George by British Socialists in the Eighties," American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. XI (1951-2) pp. 61-74.

_____, "George's Remedies for Britain's Land Problems," American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. X (1950-51) pp. 357-370.

Leventhal, F. M., Respectable Radical: George Howell and Victorian Working-Class Politics (1971).

Lynd, Helen M., England in the Eighteen-Eighties (Oxford, 1945).

Maccoby, S., English Radicalism 1853-1886 (1938).

Morton, A. L., and George Tate, The British Labour Movement 1770-1920 (1956).

Nethercot, A. H., The First Five Lives of Annie Besant (1961).

Pelling, Henry, America and the British Left (1956).

_____, "H. H. Champion: Pioneer of Labour Representation," Cambridge Journal Vol. VI (1953) pp. 222-238.

_____, The Origins of the Labour Party (2d ed., Oxford, 1965).

_____, Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain (1968).

Perkin, H. J., "Land Reform and Class Conflict in Victorian Britain," in J. Butt and I. F. Clarke, The Victorians and Social Protest (Newton Abbot, Devon and Hamden, Conn. 1973) pp. 177-217.

Pierson, Stanley, "Ernest Belfort Bax, 1854-1926: the Encounter of Marxism and Late Victorian Culture," Journal of British Studies, Vol. XII (Nov. 1972) pp. 39-60.

_____, Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism: the Struggle for a New Consciousness (Ithaca, N. Y., and London, 1973).

Plummer, Alfred, Bronterre: a Political Biography of Bronterre O'Brien 1804-1864 (1971).

Reid, J. H. Stewart, The Origins of the British Labour Party (Minnesota, 1955).

Rothstein, Theodore, From Chartism to Labourism: Historical Sketches of the English Working-Class Movement (1929).

Saul, S. B., The Myth of the Great Depression, 1873-1896 (1969).

Saville, John, "The Background to the Revival of Socialism in the 1880s," Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, No. 11 (Autumn 1965), pp. 13-17.

_____, ed., Democracy and the Labour Movement: Essays in Honour of Dona Torr (1954).

_____, "Henry George and the British Labour Movement," Science and Society, Vol. XXIV (1960) pp. 321-333.

Semmel, Bernard, Imperialism and Social Reform (1960).

Shipley, Stan, Club Life and Socialism in Mid-Victorian London (Oxford, 1971).

Thompson, E. P., William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary (1955).

Thompson, F. M. L., "Land and Politics in England in the Nineteenth Century," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th Ser., Vol. XV (1965), pp. 23-44.

Thompson, Paul, Socialists, Liberals and Labour: the Struggle for London, 1885-1914 (1967).

_____, The Work of William Morris (1967).

Tsuzuki, C., H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism (Oxford, 1961).

Webb, Sidney and Beatrice, History of Trade Unionism (1920).

_____, Industrial Democracy (1920).

Wiener, Martin J., "The Changing Image of William Cobbett," Journal of British Studies, Vol. XIII (May 1974) pp. 135-154.

Wilkins, M. S., "Non-Socialist Origins of England's First Important Socialist Organisation," International Review of Social History, Vol. IV (1959) pp. 199-207.

Wolfe, Willard, From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889 (New Haven and London, 1975).