THE GENESIS OF THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY

by

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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>The Years Between</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>The Old and the New Socialism</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>The Old and the New Unionism</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>The Old and the New Labour Representation</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>The Labour Representation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>The Advent of the Labour Party</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td></td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bibliography:

- Note                                             | 170  
- Part I: Books                                    | 171  
- Part II: Periodicals                             | 182  

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The advent of the Labour party was undoubtedly the most important political event in the history of Great Britain during the last half century. But the most superficial study of the party must reveal that its history is something more than an episode in the realm of politics. Its roots reach deep down into the life of the nation, and though the political circumstances of its emergence must not be neglected, neither must they be permitted to overshadow many economic and social causes, nor to hide minor influences which can only be classified as artistic and religious.

To undertake to write an account of the creation of the British Labour party is, therefore, to be faced with the difficult problem of confining the subject within reasonable limits. To attempt this limitation is to realize that its ramifications are, for practical purposes, limitless. It encroaches upon a dozen fields, the mastery of any one of which would require a lifetime of study. The history of trade unionism and its attendant problem of industrial relations stretches far away in one direction.
That of economic and socialist theory, to give only a second example, presents vast vistas in another.

This being the case it is wisest frankly to confess the difficulties involved, and to acknowledge that the study which follows has been quite arbitrarily limited to a single aspect of the Labour party's history—the emergence of the party as such. It makes no pretence of going further than to indicate and outline the influences which brought about the presence of independent Labour representatives in the House of Commons, and, upon that foundation, slowly constructed first a Labour group, and, finally, a Labour party.
Chapter I
THE YEARS BETWEEN

It is difficult to select a satisfactory date to which to assign the birth of the movement which produced the British Labour party. The year 1881 is frequently chosen because it saw the commencement of the activities of Henry Mayers Hyndman, whose propaganda is usually said to have marked the definite appearance of modern Socialism in Great Britain. But Socialism alone did not create the Labour party, and certain Socialists have never been in genuine sympathy with it—Hyndman himself, for example. Its advent was the result of developments in the trade union world, and of the rise of a new conception of labour representation, as well as the consequence of socialist activity. The movement which produced it was thus a compound one, and probably no one birth-year would apply satisfactorily to all its various component parts. In any case an exact date would be more interesting than important. It is the development and practical application of the idea of an independent political labour party that matters, and that concerns us here. C. R. Fay has marked out the contrasting milestones between which these pages attempt to travel, as follows: "In the year 1880 a Parliamentary
Labour Party did not exist or show signs of coming into existence. By the year 1906 it was an organised group with 31 representatives.\textsuperscript{1}

The history of a movement resembles the biography of an individual insofar as it is usually necessary to devote its first few pages to the study of ancestry. This is particularly true in the present instance. It is essential to glance back briefly over the period between 1850 and 1880, for much of the development which followed the latter year was either made possible by or, in some cases, was the direct result of, the events of the previous thirty years. It is true that these years are usually represented as being for practical purposes a blank in the history of British Socialism. They constituted what G. D. H. Cole calls the "Golden Age" of capitalism,\textsuperscript{2} characterized by a tremendous industrial development and expansion of prosperity, and marred by only two periods of depression, neither of which was serious.\textsuperscript{3} It is usual to represent the worker as sharing to some extent in the general prosperity and therefore comparatively content with his lot. This picture is in most respects accurate; but it fails to give due prominence to various changes which took place, and which in sum had, by 1880, greatly improved the prospects of success for a popular movement as compared with the corresponding conditions in 1850.

\textsuperscript{1} C. R. Fay, Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century, 250. (Cambridge, 1920).
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid, 21.
In the first place, to represent the history of Socialism in Great Britain as being a blank is dangerously misleading. In one sense it is true that with the collapse of Chartism in 1848 and of Christian Socialism soon after, the British movement sank into a state of coma, from which it was not roused until about 1881. But it is essential to distinguish between socialist propaganda and socialist thought. The wave of prosperity which swept over Great Britain in the early eighteen-fifties drowned out the former. The working classes "discarded all socialist chimeras"\(^4\), and turned their attention to the economic realities of the moment. A period of energetic political activity was thus followed, as on several more recent occasions, by a disillusioned rebound towards more direct methods of action. But if propaganda ceased, socialist thought lived on and made tremendous and significant progress. For it was during these quiescent years that Karl Marx, exiled in England like so many foreign leaders by the collapse of the continental revolutionary movement of 1848, developed his socialist doctrines and commenced the publication of "Das Kapital".

The importance of Marx's influence in Great Britain is very difficult to estimate. It is often belittled on the ground that orthodox Marxism has never gained a large following there. Keith Hutchison, for example, supports this viewpoint in his history of the Labour party. "The truth is", he says, "--and I state it fully conscious of its blasphemy--that Marx's influence on British Socialism has

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has been extremely small."\(^5\) Edward R. Pease likewise states that Marx's "socialism fell on deaf ears, and it may be said to have made no impression on the leaders of English working-class thought."\(^6\) But these views would seem to be based too exclusively upon the failure of the Marxian doctrines to win numerous thorough-going converts. Paradoxically, it is not those doctrines that are important. The British mind is singularly unimpressed by theory, and the vagueness of the socialist confessions of faith with which it is satisfied is a never-ending source of wonder to the continental.\(^7\) But Marx had, in Ramsay MacDonald's phrase, "a vision of things"\(^8\) as well as the explanation for them which his doctrines constitute. He contributed to Socialism a number of inspiring ideas which changed completely not only the movement's character, but also its conception of its surroundings. The Socialism that arose in Great Britain in the eighteen-eighties contrasted strongly with that current in the eighteen-forties, and that contrast was due in no small measure to Marx. For reaction as well as action must be considered when influences are being measured; and the direct inspiration of Marx's vision, together with the ferment of discussion and refutation to which his doctrines gave rise, demand attention in any account of the British political labour movement.

\(^8\) J. Ramsay MacDonald, Socialism: Critical and Constructive, 73. (London, 1921).
The Marxian theories are dealt with elsewhere; but a word must be said here regarding Marx's contribution to Socialism in general. First, and perhaps most important, he gave to the movement and to its aspirations "an atmosphere of reality". He based his theories not upon a projected Utopia or a belief in the virtues of revolution, but upon the characteristics of the England in which he wrote. The evidence he marshalled to convince his readers was therefore familiar to them. The approach of the socialist better world ceased to be a vague unreality, and was suddenly rooted in the actual world of the moment. The worker had only to look about him to see the bases upon which Marx built. He interpreted the familiar incidents of life, pointed out tendencies, drew conclusions. The vividness of the effect was increased when Marx first attracted attention in Great Britain by the acute industrial depression which came at the end of the capitalist "Golden Age".

Marx's second contribution was the conception of Socialism as something inevitable, and, further, as something imminent. Capitalism, carrying within itself the seeds of its own decay, was pictured as on the verge of collapse; and though Socialism would not come without a struggle, its ultimate victory was certain. Marx's message was thus militantly optimistic; and, as in the case of the evidence he produced, circumstances added to the attractiveness of this attitude. For, from the workers' point of view, the capitalist "Golden Age" was not such as to produce optimism. Marx, as Harold Laski has expressed it,

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9 Fay, Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century, 247.
"performed the incalculable service" of approaching the social problem with "a message of hope in an epoch where men seemed to themselves to have become the hapless victims of a misery from which there was no release."11

Although Marx passed the last thirty-four years of his life in England he had remarkably little contact with the English labour leaders. He remained a foreigner in many respects, and his works were not available in English until comparatively late. Although he lived until 1883 he had little personal connection with the revival of Socialism because of the unfortunate personal relations between himself and his chief English exponent, Hyndman. Twenty years previously, however, Marx had come in contact with the British leaders upon the organisation of the first International,12 in London in 1864. Marx soon took the lead in the movement, which was wrecked by internal controversies within a few years. The attitude of the British delegation doubtless displeased him, for, although Marx gave the inaugural address and drew up the rules of the organisation, they looked upon their membership, as Cole expresses it, primarily "as a gesture of sympathy with continental movements of the oppressed."13 Assuredly they had no genuine sympathy with the International's programme and its Marxian doctrines.14 In addition to this episode Marx's friendliness...

12 The official title was the International Working Men's Association. The continental sections became increasingly revolutionary after 1867, Marx moved the headquarters to New York in 1872, and the International expired there four years later.
14 Ibid, II, 87.
with British leaders would not be increased by a suspicion that trade unionism was winning concessions for the workers and meeting with a success that tended to undermine some of his contentions.  

Personal relationships, however, would inevitably have been wrecked on doctrinal rocks, and Marx, as has been emphasized above, made a vital contribution to Socialism quite apart from doctrine. He correctly distinguished his Socialism as being scientific, if he implied by that the careful and realistic study of the questions involved. There is exaggeration but also truth in Bernard Shaw's statement that Marx "seized on the blue books which contained the true history of the leaps and bounds of England's prosperity, and convicted private property of wholesale spoilation, murder and compulsory prostitution; of plague, pestilence and famine; battle, murder, and sudden death." Furthermore, Marx's work compelled attention and study even from its enemies in such a fashion that Socialism's reputation rose enormously in the intellectual sense. And, finally, the new sense of reality, combined with the confidence in its destiny with which Marx had filled the movement make good his claim to be something more than a theorist. In a word, he "was greater and more abiding than Marxism."

The history of Socialism in Great Britain during the 1850-1880 period is not complete when Marx has been dealt with, but other lesser developments cannot be recorded here.

15 Fay, Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century, 249.
16 G. Bernard Shaw and Others, Fabian Essays in Socialism, 162. (First published 1889; Ball edition, Boston, 1908).
18 MacDonald, Socialism: Critical and Constructive, 73.
One phase of its history, however, must be treated at some length—the extraordinary fashion in which it succeeded in penetrating political economy. The swing of the economists in the direction of Socialism is best illustrated in the evolution of the opinions of John Stuart Mill, the most commanding figure in political economy during the period. Mill was the transitional thinker who bridged the gap between the advocates of laissez-faire on the one hand, and the acknowledged partisans of collectivism on the other.

The succeeding editions of his "Principles of Political Economy", which first appeared in 1848, form a guide which indicates the gradual but steady advance of Mill towards Socialism. In spite of the disastrous impression made by the Socialists in 1848, Mill dealt with their theories quite calmly even in the first edition of the "Principles". In the 1852 edition appeared the following highly remarkable sentence: "If, therefore, the choice were to be made between Communism with all its chances, and the present state of society with all its sufferings and injustices; if the institution of private property necessarily carried with it as a consequence that the produce of labour should be apportioned as we now see it, almost in an inverse ratio to the labour....; if this or Communism were the alternative, all the difficulties, great or small, of Communism would be but as dust in the balance." A few years later Mill went still further, in his "Autobiography". Socialism he repudiated as tyrannical; but he "looked forward to a time when Society will no longer be divided into the idle and the industrious; but when the rule that they who do not work

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19 "Communism" and "Socialism" were then synonymous. 20 Julius West, John Stuart Mill, 18-19. (Fabian Tract No. 168; London, 1913).
shall not eat, will be applied not to paupers only, but impartially to all; when the division of the produce of labour, instead of depending, as in so great a degree it now does, on the accident of birth, will be made by concert on an acknowledged principle of justice..."21

It seems highly remarkable in the light of these and other passages that Mill should have retained his authoritative position as an economist during a period devotedly attached to the theories of laissez-faire. Perhaps the reason was that he was in general opposed to state interference, "on the grounds that a multiplicity of functions must lead to inefficiency."22 Nevertheless he went further in the land question, and formulated the theory of unearned increment, and advocated its taxation for the general benefit. In 1870 he founded the Land Tenure Reform Association to promote this cause, but its success was not great.

Mill has a place in the history of labour representation as a strong advocate of the presence of a few working-class members in Parliament; though, curiously enough, he was opposed to the payment of members and to the secret ballot. But his importance in the present connection depends upon his leanings towards Socialism. Mill died in 1873 without completing a projected book on the subject, but the first chapters were published in the "Fortnightly Review" in 1879, and give some idea of his latest conclusions.

He commenced by expressing the conviction that the extended franchise granted in 1867, contrary to the general opinion, would eventually be used by the newly-enfranchised

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22 West, John Stuart Mill, 19.
voters for their own ends. Great changes would inevitably follow, and he urged the absolute necessity of studying the entire question. "The future of mankind will be greatly imperilled, if great questions are left to be fought over between ignorant change and ignorant opposition to change." 23

Continuing, he declared that "the more prominent and active leaders of the working classes are usually in their private creed Socialists of one order or another." 24 Non-socialists must, therefore, study Socialism, recognizing its merits as well as its defects, in order to effectively meet the arguments of these leaders. Mill realized that the question of poverty would arise immediately, and acknowledged that it was frequently due to the accident of birth. His comment on the question as to whether or not poverty was a necessary evil is remarkable. "This cannot", he says, "be taken on the word of an interested party. The working classes are entitled to claim that the whole field of social institutions should be re-examined, and every question considered as if it now arose for the first time..." 25

Thereafter follows his outline and criticism of Socialism, which cannot be even synopsised here. But two things must be noted—its limitations and its conclusions. Socialism to Mill consisted essentially of the work of Saint-Simon, Louis Blanc and Robert Owen. Apparently he had never heard of Marx. He declared himself to be in sympathy with the objects of Socialism, but feared that its ideals could not be realized—at least not without a period of education which would be both prolonged and difficult.

23 John Stuart Mill, "Chapters on Socialism", Fortnightly Review, 31 (1879), 220.
24 Ibid, 221.
Mill, like most critics of Socialism, found no positive solution for the problem of supplying a motive to replace the personal one, and, furthermore, he felt that the Socialists had "a very imperfect and one-sided notion of the operation of competition."26 But it is notable that he frankly confessed that the Socialists had a strong case in many respects. His statement that "much of their allegations is unanswerable" is not rendered innocuous by the qualifying counter statement that "not a little is the result of errors in political economy."27

Mill is only the most important example of a tendency which exercised an influence on most of the leading political economists of the age. John Elliott Cairns, for example, aiming his shafts at the wealthy in particular, declared that "no public benefit of any kind arises from the existence of an idle rich class."28 In 1882, before the socialist revival was well under way, Jevons published "The State in Relation to Labour", in which the most precious doctrine of Laissez-faire—that the activities of the state should be kept as limited as possible—was met by the teaching "that there was no pre-supposition either for or against State-interference",29 and that every case for state action should, therefore, be decided upon its own merits. Political economy during the 1850-1880 period thus progressed far in the direction in which the Labour party was to find its economic foundations. The change was not realized at the moment; for socialist ideas,

27 Mill, "Chapters on Socialism", Fortnightly, 31(1879), 373.
26 Ibid, 375.
such as those of Mill, appeared so impractical that they made
at the most but a momentary impression, and, more usually,
one at all.30

The economists were only the most significant victims
of a power of permeation which did much for Socialism during
this period of its supposed inactivity. Essayists, novelists
and poets all felt, and frequently responded to, the strength
of its appeal. To examine that response at any length is here
impossible; but it is essential to at least outline the work
of John Ruskin. Unlike the more fortunate Mill, his
increasingly liberal inclinations cost him much both in
reputation and popularity. Strikes in London led Ruskin to
write a series of lectures on economic and social matters
as early as 1859. These lectures later developed into the
four papers which constitute "Unto this Last". They
appeared in the "Cornhill Magazine" early in 1861, "and",
as Ruskin himself relates, "were reprobated in a violent
manner, so far as I could hear, by most of the readers they
met with."31 In spite of this Ruskin was convinced that
the papers were "the best, that is to say, the truest,
rightest-worded, and most serviceable things"32 that he had
ever written. Hobson maintains that he spent the rest of
his life in a lengthy vindication of the opinions thus
endorsed, and that in all his work after the appearance of
"Unto this Last" "the spirit of social criticism is always
dominant, always inspiring, often overwhelming, the formal
topic of his treatment."33

30 Thomas Kirkup, A History of Socialism (Fifth Edition,
31 John Ruskin, Unto this Last (Everyman Edition), 109.
(London, 1907).
32 Ibid.
33 J. A. Hobson, John Ruskin; Social Reformer, 43.
(London, 1898).
Ruskin's ideas regarding social questions are scattered throughout the vast bulk of his work, and he himself left no formal collected statement of them. He was first stirred by the bad workmanship to which the machine age had given rise. Like Morris he was essentially an artist, and instinctively revolted against the mechanical and the ugly. Upon this revolt, and upon a growing conviction that the world was obsessed with false ideals and false values, Ruskin's attitude rests. From this standpoint he made a dual attack, first upon the theory of the age, as it was expressed in the work of the orthodox economists, and, secondly, upon its practice, as illustrated by the characteristics of the industrial system.

Ruskin believed that political economy—which he considered should be called mercantile economy—was much too exclusively preoccupied with things material. He objected particularly to the usual definitions of value and wealth—to the monetary standards insisted upon in the one case, and the confining of the other to material things. He likewise denied the legitimacy of the theory of the "economic man". In a word, Ruskin insisted upon the necessity of "humanising" economics, and, this being the case, what was "the use of a science which begins by assuming that man is what he is not?"  

The industrial system Ruskin considered wasteful, unjust and inhumane. He condemned competition, deplored the excessive division of labour because of its detrimental effect on the worker, and approved machinery only in so far

34 Hobson, John Ruskin, 304.
35 Ibid, 44.
36 Ibid, 64. Ruskin's own words.
37 Ibid, 44.
as it reduced dangerous or tedious work. A machine-made article was undoubtedly cheaper but, as Ruskin was convinced that quality suffered, he denied that the lower price represented a real gain to the purchaser. As in the case of political economy, Ruskin was really insisting upon the reform of the industrial system in the interests of human values. Production for profit should give way for production in the best interests of the producer and consumer alike.

Ruskin's attitude was essentially ethical, as is shown by his condemnation of profit in exchange, and also of interest. The former in his opinion depended upon the ability of one person to cheat another; the latter resulted from an advantage taken of someone's need. A moral foundation underlay his other opinions also. Shoddy products, for example, were to be condemned not merely because of their shoddiness, but also because "only good work can produce real utilities." The prevalence of and distress due to poverty caused him to condemn luxury; for he believed "that as long as there are cold and nakedness in the land around you, so long there can be no question at all but that splendour of dress is a crime." "Luxury is indeed possible in the future--innocent and exquisite; luxury for all, and by the help of all; but luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant; the cruelest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold."

These sentences illustrate how nearly Ruskin approached the Socialist position. The Preface of "Unto this Last" contains an outline of proposed reforms based upon the government's responsibility for the education, employment and

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38 Hobson, John Ruskin, 140 et seq.
39 Ibid, 120.
40 John Ruskin, A Joy Forever, section ii.
41 Ruskin, Unto this Last, 193.
and welfare of the individual that is astoundingly modern in conception. The plan calls for government "manufactories and workshops for the production and sale of every necessary of life, and for the exercise of every useful art." Private enterprise is to be left without restraint or tax, free "to do their best, and beat the government if they could..." The cleavage between Ruskin and the Socialists so far as the end desired is concerned is almost a matter of detail; but an abyss opens between them when the subject of democracy is introduced. Ruskin was convinced that the people could not help themselves, and placed his hopes upon a moral appeal to the liberal mindedness and self-sacrifice of the upper classes. It is easy to ridicule the futility of such an appeal, but its weaknesses do not destroy the very great significance of Ruskin's opinions, and of his persistency and courage in spreading them in a distinctly unsympathetic age. Hobson may have overestimated his influence, but there is much to be said for his opinion that Ruskin did "more than any other Englishman to compel people to realise the nature of the social problem in its wider related issues affecting every department of work and life, and to enforce the supreme moral obligation of confronting it." Many writers and thinkers shared with Ruskin this unconscious work of preparing a foundation of opinion upon which the Labour party was later to be constructed. Carlyle thundered against competition and the rottenness of both the industrial system and the government of his time.

42 Ruskin, Unto this Last, 112. For the entire scheme cf. 111-113.
43 Hobson, John Ruskin, vi.
44 Ruskin, Unto this Last, 112.
45 Cf. Niles Carpenter, Guild Socialism, 28. (New York, 1922); also Barker, Political Thought in England, 184 et seq.
Arnold was stirred by the materialism and the questionable motives which lay behind the prosperity of the age. Novelists followed in the footsteps of Disraeli, and such writers as Kingsley, Mrs. Gaskell, Reade and Dickens presented various phases of the social problems from varying points of view. The Victorian poets, like the novelists, responded to the humanitarian spirit that gradually gathered force as liberal and socialist ideas spread. At the end of the 1850-1880 period Christian Socialism revived when, on St. Peter's Day 1877, the Reverend Stewart D. Headlam founded the Guild of St. Matthew. The organisation was primarily religious, especially during its first years of existence, and did not declare itself as definitely socialist until 1884. Nevertheless one of its three original purposes was "To promote the study of social and political questions in the light of the Incarnation," and its appearance, in view of the then imminent revival of popular socialist propaganda, is of historical significance.

The Guild of St. Matthew, however, like the novels of Dickens, or the treatises of John Stuart Mill, was the work of an individual; and something must next be said regarding some important changes which heightened the contrast between the England of 1850 and that of 1880 which were too general in character to have been the result of the efforts of any single person or even group of persons. One of the most important of these was a tremendous strengthening of the humanitarian spirit. The prevalence of poverty and the character of the living and working conditions in which millions of the workers passed their lives in an age of

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46 Carpenter, Guild Socialism, 31.
unprecedented prosperity slowly but surely awakened the public conscience. Like young Remington at Cambridge, it began to "feel the massive effect of that multitudinous majority of people who toil continually, who are for ever anxious about ways and means, who are restricted, ill clothed, ill fed and ill housed, who have limited outlooks and continually suffer misadventures, hardships and distresses through the want of money." Even in an age officially confessing its faith in laissez-faire it became increasingly apparent that poverty, as Mill had pointed out, was frequently due to no fault on the part of its victims. Gladstone, as early as 1864, confessed in an address that "the intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power" which he had to record was "entirely confined to the propertied classes." This is precisely the conclusion upon which the Labour party in after years built much of its programme; and Ramsay MacDonald, writing in 1905, opens his analysis of Socialism and Society with a statement which might well have been a supplement to Gladstone's. "Poverty..., it reads, "still challenges the reason and the conscience of men, and instead of becoming less acute as national wealth increases, it becomes more serious."

The stirring of the public conscience instilled in a measure of government action, but the movement got under way slowly. Nevertheless progress was made, and culminated in a period of social legislation in the later 'seventies which was the most active of the century. Furthermore, although

50 Ramsay MacDonald, Socialism and Society, 1.
(Socialist Library; London, 1905).
the specific acts passed were themselves of importance, the change in attitude that their passing indicated was more important still. In the first place, the new laws frequently amounted to an assumption by the government of a responsibility from which the orthodox exponents of laissez-faire would have had it hold strictly aloof. The Cross Housing Act, passed in 1876, was, for example, "the first clear recognition of the public responsibility for housing conditions in the towns."52 Furthermore, in some cases state interference was carried so far that the acts were practically socialist in character. Post Office Savings Banks were established in 1861; insurance policies were issued in 1864. The election of 1880 placed in power a Gladstone government which passed much "quasi-socialist legislation"53, the Irish Land Act of 1881 being an important example. While it is true that new or exceptional circumstances were responsible for most of this, the precedent created was nevertheless a valuable one.

Important, too, was a new conception of reform which grew up in Great Britain during the 1850-1880 period. It centred upon the realization that the vote was not enough— that its possession did not give rise to any magical results, and that it was at best a means to an end. Political action began to be judged more strictly upon its results, and political reform was increasingly replaced by social measures in the public mind. The growing demand for legislation in the

interests of the working classes was not only important in itself, but from the present point of view was particularly significant because of the scheme for securing labour representation in Parliament to which it gave rise, and which is dealt with in detail elsewhere. This new conception of reform, which placed the emphasis upon the solution of social problems instead of upon the rebuilding of political machinery, should be carefully noted. For it goes far towards explaining the advent of the Labour party, which may be quite fairly described as a political means of attaining social ends in the interests of the working classes. There was much truth in the remark made by Sidney Webb in 1889, that England was "getting beyond the time of Reform Bills".

One last important development remains to be noted—the spread and influence of education. It is true that the first Education Act was only passed in 1870, but some advance had been made previous to it, and the England of the 'eighties offered a decided contrast to that of the 'forties with regard to popular enlightenment. The coming of a free, cheap press, made possible by the gradual removal of taxes and duties which had made newspapers expensive, was one influential cause of this. The publication of parliamentary papers was another important advance. Furthermore, the spirit of the times was one of expansion, and thought, breaking free from bondage, was making up its mind anew about the world in

general. The passing of the old religious views gave rise to a conviction, as it has been expressed, "that actual life here is just as sacred, normal, good, as it ever was or will be in any hypothetical past or future." This stressing of reality found expression in a new school of fiction which reflected "a desire to know things as they are, to sound the plummet in the sea of human misery, to have done with make-believe."

The effect of this popular educational advance was not felt seriously until the later 'eighties, after the Reform Bill of 1884; but it received its baptismal political recognition in the famous Gladstone Midlothian campaign of 1879.

The years between the collapse of Chartism and the revival of Socialism were thus anything but barren from many points of view. Socialism itself came out of its coma a far more scientific and practical faith, with its present, if not in all cases its hoped-for future, rooted in reality. Political economy had to a great extent abandoned the doctrines of laissez-faire, and entered the 'eighties prepared to look with tolerance and at times with favor upon government interference. Ruskin had done much to secure recognition of the importance of human values; while essayists, novelists and poets troubled the nation's conscience and undermined its faith in things as they were. An increasingly active humanitarian spirit pressed for the

55 Shaw and Others, Fabian Essays, xxxvi. (From the preface on the Fabian Society by William Clarke.)
56 Ibid, xxxiv.
improvement of disgraceful living and working conditions. Social legislation suggested to the people the possibilities of parliamentary action and made them see in political reform a powerful means of obtaining a desirable end; and the gradual spread of enlightenment increased the importance of all these changes. Lastly, the thirty years between 1850 and 1880 saw two developments which may be barely mentioned here, but the great significance of which will be pointed out in due course. The first of these was the creation of a powerful and widespread trade union and co-operative movement which, modified by circumstances and new ideas, was later to form the body, if not the brains, of the Labour party. The second was the rise of Labour to what Beer calls "a junior partnership with the Liberal Party" — a status that proved both irritating and ineffective, and the failure of which to give the working classes satisfaction cleared the way for independent political action.

Although the socialist revival is usually said to have commenced in 1881, evidence of an increased interest in Socialism is found in the periodical literature of the later 'seventies. As early as 1875 the "Fortnightly Review" published a remarkably penetrating article on "Karl Marx and German Socialism" by J. Macdonell. Speaking of his writings in general but of "Das Kapital" in particular, Macdonell says: "I have good reason to doubt whether they are much read here, or whether most educated Englishmen are aware of their

57 Beer, History of British Socialism, II, 196.
influence abroad."58 In spite of long years of residence and work in England Marx was there "almost the shadow of a name."59 The next sentence applies almost as well to the nineteen-thirties as to 1875. "People may do him the honour of abusing him; read him they do not."60 There follows a short, fair outline of Marxian theory, much of which Macdonell believed could be proven unsound. But he considered it essential that Marx should be considered seriously, and feared "that English economists will too readily pass by the truths concealed by uncouth phraseology and wild words. In the nondescript deposit left by this turbid and vehement stream that disdains to keep within the banks of sober reasoning there are some jewels."61

Other articles on German Socialism and various phases of political economy followed in the "Fortnightly"62 before the memorable appearance of the three "Chapters on Socialism" by John Stuart Mill, the first of which was published in February 1879. One month previously the "Contemporary Review" had published a long article by the Reverend William Cunningham with the unexpected title of "The Progress of Socialism in England". Cunningham warns his readers against the over-complacency to which the contrast between the peaceful

58 J. Macdonell, "Karl Marx and German Socialism", Fortnightly Review, 23 (1875), 383.
59 Ibid, 384.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid, 391.
62 Cf. also "Caesarism, Romanism, Socialism", an unsigned article in the Quarterly Review, 144 (1877), 380. Marx's "Das Kapital" is one of the three books supposedly reviewed, but the mention of him is extremely scanty.
condition of England and "the alternate displays of wild fanaticism and stern interference" abroad was apt to give rise, and expressed the opinion that "in spite of all this comparative calm there is reason to believe that Socialism is making slow but sure and steady progress in this country." The evidence he brought forward in support of this contention is interesting, partly because it reveals Marxian influence. He maintains that "a succession of crises has come to be the law of our commercial life", and that "each one involves the dissipation of immense wealth, the rupture of long-established connections, and a temporary anarchy." For this and other reasons he felt that Socialism was coming, "not as a remedy for the miseries of the poor, but rather as an alleviation of the cares of the rich..." But the important point is that although an advocate of extended co-operation and not of socialist remedies, he believes nevertheless "that our industrial life is going through a period of transition", and sees much to indicate that "the result of that transition will be Socialism".

These stray articles are both interesting and significant, but the end of the capitalist "Golden Age" of prosperity was undoubtedly the most powerful single cause for the appearance and growth of a popular socialist agitation. Exports declined after 1872, and things came to a crisis in 1878-79.

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid, 252.
66 Ibid,
67 Ibid, 259.
recovery followed, but a second and longer period of hard times succeeded and lasted until 1888. It was during the decade between 1878 and 1888 that Socialism secured its hold upon England. The end of prosperity resulted in a great increase in unemployment, falling wages, the weakening of the trade unions, and the creation of a widespread discontent, all of which helped to give a new attractiveness to radical proposals. Above all, less prosperous times laid a greater emphasis upon the problem of poverty, and consequently added an increased interest to any proposals for its cure.

This background explains why the publication of "Progress and Poverty" by Henry George in 1879 was an important event in the history of Great Britain as well as that of the United States. George was not a socialist; but for a number of reasons both his book, which went through edition after edition, and his personality, which made its impression during several series of lectures delivered in England, did much for the cause of Socialism. The simplicity, vigor and optimism of his teaching stirred his huge audience. The land and agricultural questions, which were receiving great attention in the late 'seventies, assured close attention to his message. But many of his hearers drew important and frequently unauthorized inferences from his work. In the first place, George, as J. A. Hobson pointed out in an article published in 1897, "first brought home to a large section of the public

the need and the interest of economic study." Pease, the historian of the Fabian Society, believes that "the great conception he (George) contributed to the thought of the 'eighties was that poverty was an evil preventable by State action." But just as important, perhaps, was the fact that many of George's readers carried his conclusions further than he did himself. Bernard Shaw attributes his conversion to Socialism to the interest aroused in social matters by a lecture of George's which he attended by chance in September 1882. But he did not long remain content with the gospel according to "Progress and Poverty". Shaw and the others who had followed the same pathway went further. As Shaw expresses it himself, "it was not possible for us to stop where Henry George stopped..." The result was that they advanced into Socialism. Shaw, having described the fashion in which he himself was thus swept into the socialist revival, states that "he found that five-sixth of those who were swept in with me had" in like fashion "been converted by Henry George." Sidney Webb, writing in 1889, declared that "Little as Mr. Henry George intended it, there can be no doubt that it was the enormous circulation of his "Progress and Poverty", which gave the touch which caused all the seething influences to crystallize into a popular Socialist movement. ....Adherents of Mr. George's views gathered into little propagandist

70 Kirkup and Pease, History of Socialism, 369-370.
72 Ibid,
societies, and gradually developed, in many cases, into complete Socialists."73

"Progress and Poverty" was, however, much more the occasion of the revival than the cause. The reviews of the period reflect a marked dissatisfaction with both the theory and practice of Liberalism. The feeling grew that the old programme had served its day; that conditions had changed and that the programme must change with them. Gladstone's government was not giving satisfaction by its conduct of either home or foreign affairs. No real attempt was made to deal with the question of social reform. The government's attitude in Ireland met with severe criticism. Abroad, affairs in Africa, and particularly in Egypt, caused growing anxiety. But it was the lack of social legislation which caused most dissatisfaction; and Webb states that "it was mainly the feeling due to these political incidents that caused the first definitely Socialist organization to arise."74

This was the Democratic Federation, which was founded in March 1881,75 by a group which included H. M. Hyndman, Herbert Burrows and Miss Helen Taylor, a stepdaughter of John Stuart Mill. Its original purpose, as its name implied, was the creation of a federation of radical clubs, which never materialized.76 The organisation passed rapidly through three stages. First, it undertook the task of organizing a protest

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74 Ibid, 22.
75 The date is frequently given as June, presumably because the Federation was not particularly concerned with Socialism until then.
76 Kirkup and Pease, History of Socialism, 368.
against the coercive legislation being enforced in Ireland, and immense demonstrations were held in London. Next, the Federation enthusiastically advocated the proposed reforms of Henry George. But at least one member had no intention of resting content with "Progress and Poverty".

Henry Mayers Hyndman had published an article entitled "The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch" in the January 1881, issue of the "Nineteenth Century". It is moderately worded, and Marx receives bare mention; but Hyndman issues a warning that all the materials for a social conflagration are at hand in England, and several passages suggest his later doctrines. "In the machinery of our daily life", one reads, "the real producer has as yet counted for little." That social conditions should be highly inflammable is, therefore, not to be wondered at. He then goes on to present what he considers to be the heart of the matter. "Once more", he writes, "we are brought to consider the right of man to live, and that right being granted or confirmed, that he should have the further privilege to live in such wise as not to deteriorate himself or his progeny." Hyndman, who was in independent circumstances and therefore free to devote himself to the socialist cause, met Marx and discussed the possibilities of a movement with him. He was already a convert to the Marxian doctrines, but his personal relations with their author were broken by Hyndman's next move. He wrote "England for All" and distributed copies

77 Shaw and Others, Fabian Essays, xxiv.
79 Ibid, 3.
to those attending a conference which he called in June 1881. The book was an exposition of the Marxian theories; but, to avoid the rousing of prejudice, Marx's name was not mentioned, with the result that both he and Engels were estranged from the man destined to be the leading exponent of their ideas in England.

"England for All" caused trouble within the Democratic Federation as well. The society, under Hyndman's guidance, became rapidly socialist in character, and the less radical of its members gradually withdrew. The Federation's first programme consisted of nine points, eight of which were political demands, such as those for universal suffrage and the payment of members. Only one, the nationalization of land, was really a socialist objective, and it was not a new idea in England, where it had a long history before Henry George caused attention to be directed to it anew in the early 'eighties. Hyndman's influence brought about a rapid change. In 1883 he himself published "The Historical Basis of Socialism in England", and the same year the Federation issued a pamphlet entitled "Socialism made Plain" which had a tremendous sale and, as William Clarke tells us, "created a perfect consternation among persons who supposed that Socialism was merely a French or German eccentricity, due to militarism and protectionism, and that it could never rear its head in "free" England." In the same year the Federation revised

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81 Shaw and Others, Fabian Essays, xxiv.
its programme in such a way as to make it unmistakably socialist; and in 1884 the annual conference was simply recognizing an accomplished fact when it renamed the society the Social Democratic Federation. This open avowal of Socialism brought many recruits to the organisation, among them being Walter Crane, the artist, and John Burns.

Previously to this the Federation had enlisted as a member the greatest personality that played a part in the socialist revival. William Morris joined in January 1883, and soon became treasurer of the society—a position which he found a costly one. Morris was by far the most prominent figure in the movement, and it was he who "gave the Socialist movement its consequence in the public estimation..."82 That was, perhaps, his chief contribution to it, for Morris was not a Socialist in the ordinary sense. Like Ruskin, he was repelled by the deterioration of workmanship and the drudgery which seemed inseparable from the use of machinery; and held cheapness to be utter loss if it could be gained only at the cost of inferior quality and ugliness. He was not interested in socialist theory. As he himself confessed, he was "blankly ignorant of economics"83, and when struggling through Marx's "Das Kapital" he "thoroughly enjoyed the historical part", but "suffered agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the pure economics of that great work."84 Politics never

82 Kirkup and Pease, History of Socialism, 374.
   (An article reprinted from "Justice", 1894).
84 Ibid, 278.
attracted him, and he was made superbly impatient by the half-measures with which some were, even for the moment, satisfied. Morris was primarily an artist, and the motive power of his Socialism was a magnificent vision of the world as it might be—a condition of society in which there should be neither rich nor poor, neither master nor master's man, neither idle nor overworked, neither brain-sick brain workers nor heart-sick hand workers, in a word, in which all men would be living in equality of condition....—the realization at last of the meaning of the word COMMONWEALTH.85

It is not surprising that differences should have arisen between an impatient idealist of this character, and Hyndman, the journalist, possessed of much self-confidence and knowledge of the world.86 In addition, Hyndman was by nature autocratic and dictatorial, overflowed with energy, was convinced that only the ignorance or prejudice of others could keep them from adopting his opinions in toto, and passed his life firmly convinced that the final Marxian catastrophe was at hand, and that he was the only possible person to take command when it overwhelmed capitalism. Under his rule friction inevitably developed within the S. D. F. It was largely personal in nature, but its disruptive influence was great, and in December 1884 Morris and a group of malcontents left the Federation, and Morris soon after founded the Socialist League.

85 Morris, How I Became a Socialist; Works, XXIII, 277.
86 Cf. Kirkup and Pease, History of Socialism, 374.
Looking back from this point, it is seen that Socialism had made considerable progress. The S. D. F. was never large in numbers, but, imbued with a Marxian certainty regarding its message, and led by the brilliant oratory of Hyndman, it stirred up considerable interest and more apprehension in Great Britain. Provincial branches began to spring up which provided centres for its work in various parts of the country, and it became apparent that England's immunity from Socialism was at an end. The socialist movement was well under way by 1884. It is interesting to find what is practically a Labour party publication acknowledging the debt the party owes to the S. D. F. in general and to its leading spirit in particular. While pointing out that Hyndman "failed to acquire the influence his undoubted capacity should have earned, owing to his undisguised contempt for what he considered to be the stupidity and docility of the masses", and remarking upon his intolerance, it declares that he had more to do than any other person with "the beginnings of the movement which has carried the Labour Party into office and opened a new era in British politics."87

But Marxian Socialism, as already noted, has never enjoyed wide popularity in England. In spite of the interest it roused the number of actual converts made by the S. D. F. was small. The same applies to the Socialist League. The appeal of the latter was too abstract; that of the former was too harshly concrete. The early Socialists had failed to

87 The Book of the Labour Party, I, 78.
realize that, just as Marx himself admitted that the violence of the changes necessary to usher in the new era might vary in the different countries, so Socialism itself, to make its appeal a general one, would be compelled to take national temperament into consideration. In the words of Villiers, neither the S. D. F. nor the Socialist League "had learnt to speak to England in a language understood by the people." But the winter of 1883-84 is made memorable in the history of the British Labour party by the obscure beginnings of the Fabian Society, which was destined to develop a new Socialism of a kind both peculiarly practical in tone, and English in nature.  

89 The subsequent history of the S. D. F. is interesting. It affiliated with the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 but withdrew the following year. In 1908 it became the Social Democratic Party. In 1911 it amalgamated with other bodies to form the British Socialist Party, which eventually joined the Communist Party in 1920. The British Socialist Party opposed the war, but Hyndman and others supported the government, and were practically compelled to leave the party in 1916 as a consequence. They formed the National Socialist Party, which presently assumed the original name of the Social Democratic Federation. Hyndman died in 1921. Groups of malcontents left the Federation and its successors at various times. One of them, for example, formed the Socialist Labour Party in Glasgow in 1903. Another formed a Socialist Party of Great Britain in 1905.
Chapter II
THE OLD AND THE NEW SOCIALISM

The socialist revival had no sooner commenced than attempts were made to account for its advent. As early as April 1883, the "Contemporary Review" published a long article by Emile de Laveleye which suggested various reasons for its progress. Among them he placed the wages question, and the fact that "Workmen are better off than formerly, but inequality is now more visible."1 Economics, instead of refuting the arguments of Socialism, was now tending to give it a scientific foundation. Lastly, the Socialists were making progress because their theories were "gradually gaining ground amongst the high and more educated classes."2 Laveleye pointed to Ruskin as an example of this conversion, and believed, further, that the spread of education and the development of a popular press had both "prodigiously favoured"3 the socialist cause.

This spread of interest in social matters amongst the educated in general and the intellectuals in particular led to the appearance of numerous societies in the later 'seventies

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1 Emile de Laveleye, "The Progress of Socialism", Contemporary Review, 43 (1883), 575.
2 Ibid, 575.
3 Ibid, 576.
and the 'eighties. Socialism itself became something of a fad. "Drawing-room meetings for the discussion of social questions were not uncommon, and "slumming" was a fashionable amusement." These discussion circles varied in character, but their general aim was the improvement of the individual, and also of the standards of life as a whole.

The London Dialectical Society is an interesting example of these organizations, and, according to Bernard Shaw, "was a centre of the most advanced thought in London until the Fabian Society supplanted it..." William Clarke as well as Shaw was present at some of its meetings. Interest attaches also to the Zeletical Society, for at one of its meetings in the winter of 1879 Shaw first met "the ablest man in England--Sidney Webb." "He knew all about the subject of debate", Shaw tells us; "knew more than the lecturer; knew more than anybody present; had read everything that had ever been written on the subject; and remembered all the facts that bore on it." Shaw was also a member of the Bedford Society. Then, in September of 1882 he chanced upon a meeting addressed by Henry George, which impressed upon him for the first time the importance of the economic basis which underlay everyday life. The meeting had been called by the Land Nationalization Society, seceders from which presently formed the more strictly Georgite Land Reform Union. Shaw next attended the Democratic Federation, where he "pressed George's propaganda...but was told

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5 Pease, History of the Fabian Society, 258.
6 Henderson, George Bernard Shaw, 93.
7 Ibid.
to read Karl Marx."8 This, to the Federation's astonishment, he proceeded to do, and the critical attitude which he assumed towards "Das Kapital" was not to the liking of that body.

The name of Thomas Davidson lives in the history of the Labour party because, in the fall of 1883, he gathered about him in London a small group which, in the course of a few months, formed two organisations. The first was the Fellowship of New Life, which sought to bring about social regeneration by the improvement of the individual. It was hoped later to found colonies in which life would be governed by the high ideals of character and conduct which the Fellowship sought to promote. A division of opinion developed early, however, as some feared that the coming of a better social order would be long delayed if it was made to depend upon "the cultivation of a perfect character in each and all,"9 which was the avowed object of the society.

Fortnightly meetings had commenced in October 1883. At the first meeting in 1884, held January 4, this division of opinion caused the formation of a second organisation, to be called the Fabian Society.10 Its aim was "to help on the reconstruction of Society in accordance with the highest moral possibilities."11 In order to discover the best means of attaining that end the Fabians proposed to hold meetings for discussion, to send members to other "meetings held on social

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8 Pease, History of the Fabian Society, 260.
9 Ibid, 32. From the constitution of the Fellowship.
10 Many of the tracts have the following 'quotation' on their title page: "For the right moment you must wait, as FABIUS did most patiently when warring against HANNIBAL, though many censured his delays; but when the time comes you must strike hard, as FABIUS did, or your waiting will be in vain, (and fruitless)."
11 Cf. Pease, op. cit., 31 and 34.
subjects...in order that such members may in the first place report to the Society on the proceedings, and in the second place put forward, as occasion serves, the views of the Society;"¹² and, thirdly, to obtain all possible information on social matters and movements. The abyss between the Fabian Society and the Fellowship of New Life was obviously wide, but the latter lived on until 1898, and relations between the two were always cordial.

The Fabian Society was thus in its beginning more reformist than socialist, but it developed rapidly in the latter direction. It passed first through a formative period, during which it enlisted the famous group of personalities which were to make it a powerful influence in England. Hubert Bland and Edward R. Pease were among the charter members. Bernard Shaw first attended a Fabian meeting in May of 1884, and was elected a member in September. Sidney Webb and Sydney Olivier were both elected in May 1885, and were shortly joined by Mrs. Besant. William Clarke had attended a few meetings, but became a member in February 1886, followed two months later by Graham Wallas. The bonds which united these recruits were in many cases already strong. Shaw had met Olivier at the Land Reform Union. Webb and Olivier were close friends and fellow-workers at the Colonial Office. Shaw had met Clarke at the Bedford Society. Olivier had known Wallas at Oxford. This shows, as Henderson points out, that there was "a very close relation, not only between the various members of

¹² Pease, History of the Fabian Society, 34. From the minutes of the meeting held January 4, 1884.
the Fabian Society, but also between many of the advanced societies which came to life at this time." It is interesting also to learn that Shaw, whose flitting from one organisation to another was typical of the time, hesitated between membership in the Democratic Federation and in the Fabian Society. His decision, he tells us, was not determined by programmes or principles, but "solely by an instinctive feeling that the Fabian, and not the Federation, would attract the men of my own bias and intellectual habits, who were then ripening for the work that lay before us."  

This statement reveals the undetermined character of Shaw's opinions at that time. He was in this respect a typical member of the Fabian Society, which itself lacked individuality, and was, as Shaw confesses; "for a year or two just as Anarchistic as the Socialist League and just as insurrectionary as the Federation." But he insists that even then the Fabians were conscious of the latent differences in "temperament and character" which developed in due course; that they "felt it to a certain extent all along," even when they "talked revolution, anarchism,...and all the rest of it, on the tacit assumption that the object of our campaign...was to bring about a tremendous smash-up of existing society, to be succeeded by complete Socialism. And this meant," Shaw points out, writing in 1892,"that we had no true practical understanding either of

13 Henderson, George Bernard Shaw, 99.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
existing society or Socialism." Of this the Fabians became increasingly aware; and there ensued a period of self-education which continued indefinitely, but which may be said to have reached its first conclusions with the adoption of the Fabian "Basis" in June 1887, and the publication of the famous "Fabian Essays in Socialism" in 1889.

The history of these early years is a record of endless discussion and argument, both amongst the Fabians themselves, and with any exponent of any theory whom they could lure to a meeting; of endless speech-making on every possible occasion; and of the gradual emergence of a new conception of Socialism, both as regards its theory and its practice. They formed a brilliant circle of young and able thinkers; and, although Sidney Webb, supplemented by Bernard Shaw, undoubtedly had most to do with the development of Fabianism, the Fabians neither became orthodox converts to the teaching of any single master, such as Marx, nor disciples sitting in adoration at the feet of a dominant personality, such as Morris. They formed a group of keenly interested students, most of whom played a part in what amounted to a complete re-examination of the entire field of social reform, economic theory, and socialist thought. So far as human nature permitted they approached questions without preconceived ideas upon them, and sought to separate the wheat from the chaff, regardless of the unexpected places in which either might be found. The Fabians tolerated neither nonsense nor oratory, developed an invaluable ability

17 Shaw, Fabian Society, 4.
to laugh heartily at one another, and industriously sought the truth. Even when conclusions were arrived at, they recognized their frequently tentative nature, based upon the assumption that new and sounder evidence necessitating a revision of opinion might be forthcoming at any moment. Max Beer has remarked upon the open-mindedness of Webb, for example. "He professes no dogmas or final truths," Beer says; "he has no theory from which he would separate himself with regret."19

The fame which presently overtook the Fabian Society contrasted sharply with the obscurity in which it passed its early years. The process of self-education is a slow one, and Fabian activities therefore only gradually assumed their distinctive character. Furthermore, this formative period coincided with the palmy days of both the Democratic Federation and the Socialist League, and these organisations—particularly the S. D. F.—absorbed any attention the public at the time cared to bestow on Socialism. The Federation's somewhat spectacular and revolutionary agitation did, in fact, arouse some popular apprehension, and the S. D. F. itself seems to have shared with the public an exaggerated idea of the progress it was making. The result was that in 1885, as Shaw, the Fabian, records, "there occurred an event which developed the latent differences between ourselves and the Social-Democratic Federation."20 The latter ran two candidates in the general

18 Cf. Shaw, Fabian Society, 5.
19 Beer, History of British Socialism, II, 283.
20 Shaw, Fabian Society, 5.
election, one in Hampstead and the other in Kennington, and made no secret of the fact that the campaigns were being financed with funds secured from a Conservative source. The result was disastrous, as the two candidates together polled only 59 votes. Shaw calls it "a huge mistake in tactics. Before it took place, the Federation loomed large in the imagination of the public and the political parties... The day after the election everyone knew that the Socialists were an absolutely negligible quantity...so far as voting power was concerned." 21 The episode nearly wrecked the Federation, and its membership fell rapidly. The Fabian Society promptly passed a resolution condemning the taking of Tory money as conduct "calculated to disgrace the Socialist movement in England;" and the more violent Socialist League accused the Federation of "trafficking with the honour of the Socialist party." 22

This rupture in the relations between the Fabian Society and the S. D. F. came at a not inopportune moment. The Federation became absorbed immediately afterwards in the unemployed demonstrations which were particularly serious between 1885 and 1887. The arrest of Hyndman, Burns, Champion and Williams in February 1886, the riots on that occasion, and "Bloody Sunday" in Trafalgar Square in November 1887, were only the most spectacular incidents in a long and troublous period. With this agitation the Fabians had little to do. They were, Shaw says, at the time "disgracefully backward in

21 Shaw, Fabian Society, 6.
22 Ibid, 7. Shaw quotes both resolutions in full.
open-air speaking;" and the Fabians were in general "overlooked in the excitements of the unemployed agitation."23

But if they were inactive in this sense, they were far from it in another. In June 1886, they called a conference in London, to which no fewer than fifty-three radical clubs of various complexions sent delegates.24 In many respects it made no lasting impression; but it made the existence of the Fabians widely known, which was perhaps more important than they later realized.25 In any case, by this time they had definitely "repudiated the common assumption that Socialism was necessarily bound up with Insurrectionism on the one hand or Utopianism on the other", and had "set to work to discover for ourselves and to teach to others how practically to transform England into a Social Democratic Commonwealth."26 They had likewise been "sadly and sorrowfully driven to the conclusion that no sudden or simultaneous transformation of society from an Individualist to a Collectivist basis was possible, or even thinkable."27

The year 1886 is memorable in Fabian History not only for the June conference, but also for the anarchist agitation which developed within the Society in the fall of the year. The leader was Mrs. C. M. Wilson, who soon after joined Prince Kropotkin's anarchist movement, though she retained her Fabian membership. Members of the Socialist League, which

23 Shaw, Fabian Society, 10.
27 Ibid, 3.
became increasingly anarchist, commenced to attend the Fabian
meetings and press their views there. The inevitable crisis
came in September, when Hubert Bland and Mrs. Besant moved and
seconded the following interesting resolution:

"That it is advisable that Socialists should organize
themselves as a political party for the purpose of
transferring into the hands of the whole working
community full control over the soil and the means of
production, as well as over the production and
distribution of wealth."28

William Morris was present and moved a rider declaring this to
be a false step, because "no Parliamentary party can exist
without compromise and concession,"29 but, after a prolonged
debate the amendment was defeated and the resolution adopted.

The sequel to this meeting was the setting up of a Fabian
Parliamentary League, membership in which was optional. It was
chiefly a gesture in intention, and after becoming a mere
Political Committee, it "merged silently and painlessly into
the general body."30 Its manifesto, dated February 1887, is
an interesting early expression of Fabianism. It declares that
the League "is composed of Socialists who believe that Socialism
may be most quickly and most surely realized by utilizing the
political power already possessed by the people."31 The
authors of the manifesto clearly considered the formation of a
separate party to be desirable, but not immediately practicable.
Until such time as it became possible to run Socialist
candidates the League proposed to "confine itself to supporting

28 Shaw, Fabian Society, 12.
29 Ibid.
31 Ibid, 13. From the manifesto of the League, which Shaw
gives in full.
those candidates who will go furthest in the direction of Socialism." It is important to notice that it intends to guard its independence carefully. "It will not ally itself absolutely with any political party; it will jealously avoid being made use of for party purposes; and it will be guided in its action by the character, record, and pledges of the candidates before the constituencies."32 Examination of the manifesto as a whole reveals the fact that Fabianism, by the spring of 1887, had practically completed the development of the distinctive policy which it was to pursue in the years following. Writing in 1892, Shaw characterized it as "the first sketch of the Fabian policy of to-day."33

An outline of Fabian theory may be conveniently divided into three parts. It is first essential to examine the general Fabian attitude to Socialism—to discover the underlying conception of it upon which their theories rest. Secondly, a word must be said regarding Fabian economics, and, thirdly, the Fabian method—the practical means by which the Society believed that a socialist commonwealth could be established—must be considered. At the same time it is necessary to keep in mind Fabianism's claim that it acclimatized Socialism in England, and to note the chief points of contrast between it and the darker spectre it sought to displace.

It has been pointed out that one of the most attractive aspects of the socialist revival was its optimism—its

32 Shaw, Fabian Society, 13.
33 Ibid, 14.
"buoyant faith"," as Webb terms it. Unfortunately this optimism rested upon a foundation which the British mind did not find particularly agreeable. Socialism was to come as the result of an inevitable catastrophe which was about to overwhelm the capitalist system. The Marxian remedy for the ills of the world was therefore the organisation of the workers so as to ensure that they would be ready to set up a commonwealth the moment the catastrophe occurred. The Marxian was therefore interested exclusively in the future, and distrustful of reforms because they would merely bolster up the present system and therefore delay the coming of the commonwealth.

Fabianism offered a complete contrast to this conception. It looked upon Socialism as revolutionary only in the sense that the changes it contemplated were in sum so complete as to justify the use of the adjective. Reason and conscience were the foundations upon which it built. Socialism was not necessarily inevitable, but it was undoubtedly a better, and a more just system than the present one. It would immeasurably increase the chance of human comfort and happiness. And, most important, it need have nothing to do with barricades and bloodshed, or violence in any form. Moreover, the Fabians made the astounding statement that Socialism had a past in England as well as a future. It could "fairly be claimed", Webb wrote in the "Fabian Essays","that the Socialist philosophy of to-day is but the conscious and explicit assertion

34 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 387.
of principles of social organization which have been already in great part unconsciously adopted. The economic history of the century is an almost continuous record of the progress of Socialism.″35 Webb then proceeded to illustrate at length the astonishing extent to which state interference had already developed, even in the 'eighties. This development showed that the coming of Socialism called for no violent revolution, but merely for the extension of this state interference both in the form of legislation and regulation, and in that of public ownership. To the Fabians, Socialism was thus a logical development from the existing social and industrial situation;36 they looked forward to "the gradual evolution of the new order from the old, without breach of continuity or abrupt change of the entire social tissue at any point during the process."37 And, since the coming of Socialism would be by evolution instead of revolution, individual reforms were not, as the Marxian considered, mere palliatives which postponed the coming of a better social order, but were definite steps towards the chosen goal—were, in fact, evidence that the collectivist conquest of individualism had proceeded that much further.

Fabian economics seem to have developed very largely as a result of the researches of Shaw and Webb. Shaw's reaction to Marx was interesting. Speaking at a dinner held on his seventieth birthday, in 1926, he stated in a paradoxical and provocative manner a conclusion to which he had come forty

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35 Shaw and others, Fabian Essays in Socialism, 26-27.
36 Cf. Laidler, History of Socialist Thought, 253.
37 Shaw and others, Fabian Essays in Socialism, 27.
years previously. "...I have read Karl Marx," Shaw said, "and I can find nothing in him about socialism." But what he did find in "Das Kapital" was an overwhelming and passionate attack on capitalism which "changed the mind of the world." For, "whereas capital had been proud and confident, splendidly progressive," Marx made everybody ashamed of the system which it had created.38 There, for Shaw, Marx's power of conviction ceased, for his theories were to him untenable, not excepting the famous doctrine of surplus value. In place of this last Shaw adopted the theory of value dependent upon utility developed by Jevons. In the meantime Webb had been devoting much attention to Mill, and, as Shaw records, presently "astonished and confounded our Individualist opponents by citing Mill against them;"39 for Mill's popular reputation as an orthodox economist rested on the teaching of his earlier, more individualistic works. Ricardo and Henry George were, with Mill, the principal sources of Fabian theories on unearned increment—theories which they did not confine to land and rent, but extended to capital and interest. To George, probably, belongs most credit for interesting many of the Fabians, Shaw included, in economics in the first place. Mill, through the medium of Webb, seems to have been the most influential source of all. Marx's doctrines failed to win favor among the Fabians, and their economics as a consequence offered a complete contrast to those of the Social Democratic

39 Pease, History of the Fabian Society, 259.
Federation—a state of affairs which prompted some to accuse the Fabians of having avoided Marx because his was a sufficiently great personality to have overshadowed them. But the fact remains that Marx's influence on the Fabians was limited to the reaction his doctrines engendered.

As previously noted, Fabianism may be said to have reached its first conclusions with the publication of the "Essays" in 1889. The book was extraordinarily successful, and about 25,000 copies were sold within a year. It introduced a new and agreeable conception of Socialism to the British people. As Pease explains in a frequently quoted passage, it "presented the case for Socialism in plain language which everybody could understand. It based Socialism, not on the speculations of a German philosopher, but on the obvious evolution of society as we see it around us. It accepted economic science as taught by the accredited British professors; it built up the edifice of Socialism on the foundations of our existing political and social institutions; it proved that Socialism was but the next step in the development of society, rendered inevitable by the changes which followed from the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century."

All this seems to-day commonplace enough. But when the "Fabian Essays" appeared Socialism was represented in England by the Marxist S. D. F. and the increasingly anarchist Socialist League. The word connoted violence and upheaval--

41 Pease, History of the Fabian Society, 90-91.
"the Commune of Paris in 1871", as Pease notes, "was regarded as a premature attempt which pointed the way to future success;" No wonder that the "Essays" were hardly considered to be socialist at all in some quarters. A reviewer in the "Political Science Quarterly" declared that they contained much that was "only enlightened, progressive liberalism," and the Marxian Hyndman declared as late as 1912 that they "were well suited to the ordinary well-to-do man in search of half-knowledge and eager to be convinced that the favourite English vice of compromise might have full outlet in Socialism as in other fields of inquiry and thought."

But the fact remains that it is Fabianism and not Marxism which has spread abroad in Great Britain; and as Laidler notes, the programme adopted by the Labour party "in 1918 corresponds closely with the ideals held aloft by the Fabian writers thirty years before."

Fabianism, in spite of Hyndman, has proved that Marx is not essential to Socialism. Many consider its greatest achievement to be its successful championship of the right to select its ideas freely, and its refusal to confine itself to the wares displayed, no matter how enticingly, in any single window. The consequence was the breaking of the Marxian spell, and the "appearance of Socialists who dared to disagree with Marx, and challenged his right as a dictator of Socialist thought." The value of the activities of the Marxians must not be belittled. They first shook the composure of capitalist England. But the development of a conception of

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42 Pease, History of the Fabian Society, 89.
43 H. L. Osgood, Political Science Quarterly, 5 (1890), 178.
44 Hyndman, Further Reminiscences, 212-213.
45 Laidler, History of Socialist Thought, 276.
46 Kirkup and Pease, History of Socialism, 368.
Socialism which would appeal to the British temperament was conditional upon an escape from Marx; and Fabianism's success in maintaining its independence of surplus value and catastrophic prophecy was, therefore, of the greatest importance.

Education and legislation were the means by which the Fabians proposed to bring about Socialism, for, since the transition from the old to the new order would be both gradual and peaceful, it could also be constitutional. First to influence and eventually to capture the government in the interests of Socialism was, therefore, the Fabian programme. Its adoption was undoubtedly influenced by the occupation of a number of the Society's members. Webb and Olivier, for example, were clerks in the Colonial Office. They were familiar with the workings of government departments—with their virtues and their vices, and, above all, with the joints in their armor through which progressive and even socialist ideas might make an effective, if unobtrusive entry. Clerks draft despatches and prepare speeches; they see that the nation "is not so much governed by the votes of the electors, as by ideas put into the heads of official persons whether parliamentary chiefs or permanent civil servants."47 H. G. Wells has attributed to a character in "The New Machiavelli" sentiments which are in reality Fabian. Altiora Bailey believed that if she and her husband "took the necessary pains to know the facts of government and administration with precision, to gather together knowledge that was dispersed

47 Kirkup and Pease, History of Socialism, 379.
and confused, to be able to say precisely what had to be
done and what avoided in this eventuality or that, they would
necessarily become a source of reference for all sorts of
legislative proposals and political expedients."48 and, as a
consequence, a power in the land. Pease has summed up this
attitude in a sentence. "Know more than other people, know
what you want, and you can make other people carry out your
ideas."49

It is interesting to note that as early as 1887--two
years before the appearance of the "Essays"--the Fabians had
perceived that a new political party would ultimately be
essential if their ambitions were to be fully realized.50
But they themselves had no ambition to form it, and they
realized that years must pass before an appreciable percentage
of the workers would be converts to Socialism. Thus, although
the Fabians looked forward almost from the first to the
advent of a labour party, they devoted their own energies to
the problem of influencing the older parties which filled
the House of Commons at the moment. With this end in view
they adopted the famous policy of permeation, which resulted
in an energetic campaign to insinuate socialist ideas into the
Liberal and Conservative camps. Fabian education thus
endeavored to take advantage of the frailties and
susceptibilities of government, and by every means in its power
to promote legislation which was in reality, if not admittedly,

49 Kirkup and Pease, History of Socialism, 379.
50 Cf. The Book of the Labour Party, I, 103; also Beer,
History of British Socialism, II, 298.
socialist in character.

The policy of permeation was in full action by 1888, and was pressed most actively during the four or five ensuing years. Writing as late as 1894 a member of the executive gives the impression that it was the chief object of the Society. "The peculiarity of the Fabian Society," he writes, "is that it is a purely propagandist body, taking no direct political action in its own name, running no candidates, making no attempt to enlist its converts in its own ranks, but permeating all existing political and social organizations with Socialist and Democratic doctrines, stirring them up to action, pointing out the best opportunities to them, and supplying them with information, documents, a policy, and, if necessary, brains." Members were urged to join societies, parties and political clubs of every complexion, and to present the Fabian attitude on every possible occasion. It was not without reason that the members of the Society were called "the Jesuits of the Labour Movement."

It is necessary to say a word regarding the activities which made permeation policy possible. In general it may be said that the Society devoted itself almost exclusively to the threefold nature of Fabian education. First, it insisted upon self-education. Members were expected to study the socialist and labour movements in their various aspects. Above all, the Fabians sought to secure full, accurate information regarding social problems of every description.

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52 Ibid, 551.
This information secured, they turned to the question of a solution. This discovered, and developed in the form of a practical remedy, the Fabians were ready to present their analysis and conclusions to the public. Debates upon the subject within the Society would frequently strengthen the Fabian case by making the members familiar with the opposing arguments, and with the best manner in which they might be met.

The Fabian abroad in the land represents the second phase of the educational policy. It was his duty to urge the adoption of the remedy proposed—to prove that his solution was the reasonable and just one. Above all the efficacy of the socialist approach to social questions was emphasized; for the Fabian Society sought "to convert the outside world, not so much to the belief in Socialism, as to the Socialistic treatment of every individual problem of contemporary politics." This it attempted to do not only by urging its members to join and influence other organizations, but also by means of lectures and the distribution of literature. The "Fabian Essays", for example, were originally prepared in the form of a course of lectures; and with the large number of able speakers it possessed the Fabian Society was able to make a considerable impression. The famous Fabian tracts commenced to appear in 1884, but they did not assume their distinctive character until 1887, and the publication of "Facts for Socialists", by Sidney Webb. Webband Shaw were responsible for the majority

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of those published during the following five or six years; and the contrasting abilities of the two contributed much to the extraordinary success with which the pamphlets met. They were written with the object of spreading accurate information on economic and social questions in a form which could be understood by any intelligent reader. The scale upon which the Fabian propaganda was conducted is astonishing. In the year 1891-92, for example, the lecture secretary arranged for 600 lectures. But the number actually delivered by members reached 3,339. The distribution of literature reached its peak that same year. Twenty tracts were published, 308,300 were printed in all, and 378,281 distributed. Even when notice is taken of Pease's statement that "most of them" were leaflets, the record is still remarkable.

In addition to self-education and the instruction of the public, the Fabians did much to encourage the widespread adoption of their evolutionary attitude amongst other Socialists. As Villiers expresses it, the Society sought "to educate the Socialist Movement itself into harmony with English political methods..." This propaganda was naturally not to the liking of the Marxists, but Fabianism progressed in spite of that.

What Shaw has called "a Fabian boom" commenced about 1888 and continued on into the first half of the 'nineties.

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54 Pease, History of the Fabian Society, 105.
55 Ibid., 107.
57 Shaw, The Fabian Society, 19.
In 1885 the membership of the Society was only 40. By 1890 it had risen to 173; but the lecture campaigns of the next year, together with the increasing impression made by the "Essays", caused it to rise rapidly to 361 by April 1891. Thereafter it leaped to 541 in 1892, 640 in 1893 and 681 in the following year. Branches sprang up in other parts of Great Britain, and even in Bombay and South Australia. They numbered 36 in 1892, and 74 in 1893. This expansion was characteristic of the 1889-1892 period. In a reminiscent article in the "Socialist Review" in 1924 Ben Turner recalls that during it "scores of Labour Clubs, Labour Unions, Socialist Societies, and Fabian Branches started all over the kingdom, and especially in the North." The Fabian Society itself was not anxious to increase its membership. It wished to remain a compact group of students, writers and lecturers—"a source of expert, accurate information; and a large influx of raw recruits would inevitably compel it to become more popular in character. There was never any organic connection between the parent society and its branches. The London Fabians bestowed their blessing on any group who accepted the "Basis" and formed a branch; they supplied lecturers and literature whenever possible; but they "declined the impossible task of supervising or harmonising the political activities" of "these local societies."

It is significant to find a critic of Socialism admitting that "The influence of the Fabian Society...has been too

60 Pease, History of the Fabian Society, 103.
subtle to be measured, but it has certainly been very great."

The policy of permeation was not one which yielded results capable of mathematical measurement, but it undoubtedly had an immense and stimulating effect. Its influence on parliamentary legislation is difficult to estimate, but the Fabians and both their criticism and proposals, demanded ever-increasing attention and respect. The election of 1892 was the first occasion upon which they had an opportunity to make their influence directly felt in national politics. The Society issued an "Election Manifesto" by Bernard Shaw in which it reviewed the political situation and considered the possibility of an independent working-class party. It charged the older parties with a conspiracy of silence upon the questions which were really important; exposed the means by which the Liberals "checkmated labour men", and insisted upon the necessity of "the straightforward action of a genuine Working Class party, supported by Working Class subscriptions and completely independent of both Liberal and Conservative aid." All workers were urged to vote for the candidate who proved himself most friendly to the Fabian programme. In addition to the "Manifesto", the Fabians prepared lists of test questions which proved thoroughly annoying to prospective Members of Parliament. "The ordinary candidate probably never heard before of the Fabian Society," says a writer at the time, "and wondered by what right it called upon him to

62 Bernard Shaw, Fabian Election Manifesto, 1892, 8. (Fabian Tract No. 40, London, 1892).
interrupt his electioneering work—arduous as that must be
at the best—and give written replies to a formidable volley
of questions. Yet in most boroughs this Society had some
representatives, and where the contest was close they could
not be ignored without considerable risk."

But it was in municipal government that the Fabians made
their deepest impression. The County Councils Acts of 1888-
1889 placed local affairs in the hands of the ratepayers,
though the medium of democratically elected councils. The
Fabians undertook to permeate these local bodies, and to urge
the adoption by them of collectivist legislation. They gained
their most spectacular victory in London, where the so-called
Progressives, who were supporting a programme which was
distinctly collectivist in character, were victorious at the
polls. "We permeated the party organizations and pulled all
the wires we could lay our hands on with our utmost adroitness
and energy," Shaw tells us; "and we succeeded so far that in
1888 we gained the solid advantage of a Progressive majority,
full of ideas that would never have come into their heads had
not the Fabians put them there, on the first London County
Council." Similar tactics were used elsewhere. The
Fabians urged the new councils to secure control of their
supplies of electricity, gas and water, to run their own
tramways, and generally to replace or anticipate private
interests whenever it was in the general interest to do so.

Even William Morris, who distrusted political action and, as

63 "The New Government", an unsigned article in the
"Quarterly Review", 175 (1892), 540.
64 Shaw, Fabian Society, 19.
he expressed it, did not "think much of gas and water Socialism", was pleased when the Progressives won a second victory in London in 1892, and recognized that it was "a Labour victory, as the affair was worked by the Socialists and the Labour people."65 The Fabians personally took part in this permeation of local government. Shaw became a vestryman, for example, and Webb was for years a member of the London County Council.

Permeation had its limits, however, and about 1892 it became evident that Socialism in England was nearly ready to take a step which must, in some respects, leave the Fabians behind. It will be remembered that the "Election Manifesto" of 1892 made clear reference to the necessity for a new party. In February of the same year the provincial branches united with the parent Society to hold a conference in London. Fabian fortunes appeared to be flourishing, but the conference was not called so much to celebrate past successes as to face the fact that the policy of permeation was no longer adequate. Shaw read a history of the Society which concluded by pointing this out, and by declaring that the time had come to organize the new party. To create voting power was therefore the new task at which the Socialists must labour.

The Fabian Society, as previously noted, had no ambition itself to develop into the desired new party. Furthermore, it placed no conditions or limitations on the political activites in which its members might participate. It therefore included

many who were convinced Socialists, but who also believed that the Liberal party could in time be persuaded to adopt a definitely socialist programme. From the first the Fabian Society thus sheltered both champions of a reformed Liberalism, and the advocates of independent working-class action in politics. Friction did not result because the Society itself took no part in politics, though its literature, as illustrated by the 1892 "Manifesto", was occasionally distinctly partisan. The situation was an anomalous one; and, in spite of the fact that it caused no serious trouble, it compelled the Fabian Society to confine its activities almost exclusively to general socialist propaganda.

This limitation of its activities has led some to doubt the importance of the Fabians in the history of the British Labour party. Its failure to throw itself wholeheartedly into the cause of the new party as an organization was largely responsible for this. But, in reality, the Fabian Society developed the Socialism which later became the brain of the Labour party. When it was organized Socialism was the red spectre—something foreign and dangerous, built upon complicated theories which did not appeal to the British people. "It had perhaps alarmed," Pease points out, "but it had failed to attract them. It had made no real impression on the opinion of the people." The Fabians, having reviewed the whole question, came to the conclusion that Socialism could be brought about by a series of reforms, and that the way to secure these

66 Pease, History of the Fabian Society, 97.
reforms was to make use of Parliament, and to make the necessity, justice and reasonableness of the changes apparent by educational propaganda. "The establishment of Socialism", says a tract published in 1890, "when once the people are resolved upon it, is not so difficult as might be supposed."67 Various facts are quoted to show this. "Factories are already largely regulated by public inspectors, and can be conducted by the local authorities just as well as gas-works, water-works and tramways are now conducted by them in various towns. .... The Income Tax collector who to-day calls for a tax of a few pence in the pound on the income of the idle millionaire, can collect a tax of twenty shillings in the pound on every unearned income in the country if the State so orders. Remember", the tract continues, "that Parliament, with all its faults, has always governed the country in the interest of the class to which the majority of its members belonged. It governed in the interest of the country gentlemen in the old days....; and it will govern in the interest of the people when the majority is selected from the wage-earning class. Inquirers will find that Socialism can be brought about in a perfectly constitutional manner...."68 This conception of Socialism and plan of action form the theoretical basis of the Labour party, and both were Fabian creations.

Undoubtedly the Fabians had vices as well as virtues. They were middle-class folk and did most of their work in London. As a consequence they were not in intimate touch with the

68 Ibid.
proletarian movement. They were inclined to be academic. Villiers makes the unkind suggestion that they "taught much, but learnt comparatively little." 69 Hyndman, writing as early as 1886 and attempting to make the advance of Socialism in England as impressive as possible, can only credit the Fabians with "helping to spread our views among the well-to-do, who from sheer ennui are ready to look into any new proposals, political, scientific, aesthetic, or what not." 70 But these vices are of little account when compared with the solid structure of Fabian achievement. The Society made Socialism a living, growing, practical movement which could flourish in Great Britain. It spread abroad in the land what Ramsay MacDonald calls a "new conception of social structure and public policy," 71 which could only find adequate expression in a new political party.

But a party, like a person, requires a body as well as a brain—it must be supported by an army of voters as well as equipped with principles and a programme. Attention must next be directed to the developments in the industrial and political life of Great Britain which, during these same years, were tending to produce the one while the Fabians evolved the other.

71 MacDonald, Socialism and Society, 146.
Chapter III
THE OLD AND THE NEW UNIONISM

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The meaning of the words "old" and "new" is always relative; and the trade unionism which, because of the appearance of a contrasting type, was described as old in the late eighties had been itself hailed as a new departure in the early 'fifties. The collapse of Chartism had shattered hopes and illusions, and the British working classes turned its attention to realities, and set about making the best of things. It is to this "spirit of resignation"1 that Sombart believes the development of a new type of trade unionism was due.

The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, commonly known as the A. S. E., furnished the model for many similar unions which developed in England between 1850 and 1870. It was founded in 1851, and immediately commenced a fight against piece-work and overtime. The employers formed a rival organization, and a lock-out on the overtime issue followed in January 1852. The men were beaten, and were forced to renounce membership in their union—a renunciation they refused afterwards to recognize as binding because made under compulsion.2 The effect of this defeat was to make the

1 Sombart, Socialism and the Social Movement, 146.
necessity for a stronger organization clear, rather than to
discourage the members, and the A. S. E. was soon stronger
than ever. This reaction is typical of the time, and explains
why trade unionism advanced in spite of many strike failures,
comparatively few of which proved to be conclusively
disastrous.

Cole points out that the importance of the A. S. E. is
frequently overstressed by the implication "that it provided
a pattern to which all unions gradually sought to conform."³
This was not in reality the case, as the economic position of
all workers was not similar to that of the Engineers, and one
form of union would not fit all circumstances. Thus, though
the A. S. E. was undoubtedly used as a model in many cases, the
different type of organization evolved by the cotton operatives
was also widely copied. The Spinners' Union was remodelled in
1852-53, and that of the Weavers was similarly modified in 1858.
These organizations offered a contrast in many respects to the
A. S. E., and an examination of the two will indicate the
general tendencies of trade union development in Great Britain
before the socialist revival.

The Amalgamated Society of Engineers shared with the unions
of the cotton operatives its character of being a genuine trade
union—the day of the all-inclusive labour union was past. But
the A. S. E. went farthest in this direction because its
membership consisted of skilled labourers. As Cole expresses it,

³ Cole, Short History of the British Working Class Movement,
II, 53. Cole gives much the best brief account of the
Trade Union Movement, and, because of the broader nature
of his subject is often a better source for this chapter
than the Webbs.
it was "a society of skilled men, bound together by close ties of common craftsmanship." Since a spinner did not have to pass through a long and expensive apprenticeship, his union was naturally of a different nature in this respect. Furthermore, the fact that it took years to make an engineer as compared to days to train a cotton operative had a profound effect upon the character of their organizations. The engineer sought to gain his ends by controlling the supply of labour—by persuading every qualified man to join his union and by securing control of apprenticeship. This accomplished, he would be able to attack such enemies as piece-work and systematic overtime with good prospects of success. The cotton operative was in a different position. He could not hope to control the supply of labour. His chief ambition was to limit the length of the working day, and secure, first, the adoption of standard price lists, and, secondly, better working conditions in the factories. Thus, while the ability of the Amalgamated Societies to control at least the greater part of the labour supply led them to rely on industrial action and bargaining based on local conditions, the associations modelled on the Spinners' Union pinned their faith to bargaining by skilled officials acting on the part of the entire organization, and to political action aiming at the passing of Factory Acts.

The Amalgamated Societies, moreover, had many features in common with a Friendly Society. They provided their members with insurance of various kinds, such as strike, sick and death

benefits. This necessarily meant that the dues were high, and this variety of union was as a consequence limited to the more highly paid trades. Unionism in general, in fact, was during this period confined to the upper strata of the working classes, and critics of the Labour Movement in later years were to deny the validity of its claim to represent the workers as a whole.

A word should be said regarding the miners' unions. Alexander Macdonald called a conference in 1863 which resulted in the formation of the Miners' National Association. Macdonald strongly favored parliamentary as opposed to industrial action, but trouble ensued as the advocates of the latter policy grew restive. The Lancashire miners finally called a conference in 1869, their ambition being to form a new union committed to vigorous industrial action. The Amalgamated Association of Miners was set up as a consequence. In general, Scotland and the East followed Macdonald, while the West, especially Lancashire and Wales, joined the new organization. In 1873 the latter had about 100,000 members, as compared to about 125,000 in the older National Association. Both organizations were destroyed by the collapse of prosperity in the 'seventies. The Amalgamated Association, after one successful strike, found its resources so depleted that it was beaten in another, and by 1875 as a consequence of this and other difficulties it had ceased to exist. The National Association remained political

in policy. Macdonald, its founder and president, was chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, and was elected to Parliament in 1874. Two years previously, moreover, agitation had secured the passing of the Coal and metalliferous Mines Act, the foundation upon which subsequent legislation in the field has been based. But the industrial crisis of the late 'seventies weakened the Association, and its importance ended with the death of Macdonald in 1881. The miners were thus left without a national organization until opposition to the sliding-scale system resulted in the formation of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain in 1888.

The question of political as opposed to industrial action which divided the miners into two comparatively weak camps, was a characteristic of the world of organized labour at the time. It was split asunder by the controversy, though all those who supported industrial action were not in favor of an aggressive policy. Moreover, such unity as existed weakened under the strain of hard times. "The predominant feature of the Trade Union world between 1875 and 1885," the Wehbs declare, "was...an extreme and complicated sectionalism." Each union devoted itself to its own interests, and even the impression of unity conveyed by the annual meeting of the Trades Union Congress could only be maintained because "all the critical issues of industrial strife were expressly excluded from the agenda of the Congress." It was a simple matter of keeping up

6 Webb, Trade Unionism, 359.
7 Cole, Short History of the British Working Class Movement, II, 100.
appearances.

Upon one question, however, there was at least the semblance of unity—that of the legal status of trade unions. The campaign to secure a revision of the law which would give the unions a definite legal status and, in particular, safeguard their funds, was first started on a large scale in 1864. Three years later the so-called "Sheffield outrages" threatened to ruin any chance of securing this, but a Royal Commission was set up with wide powers to investigate the whole question of trade union status and activities. The unions were fortunate in securing the appointment of Thomas Hughes, a Christian Socialist, and Frederic Harrison, as members of the Commission. Robert Applegarth, a prominent labour leader, was also permitted to be present when witnesses were examined. These three men conducted a skilful defence of the trade union cause with the result that "From a wholesale attack on Trade Unions the Royal Commission began to turn into a justification of them..." But even on this vital question of status the unions could not really act unitedly. Applegarth had been selected by the large and peacefully-inclined Amalgamated Societies. The more militant unions resented this deeply, and in a specially called conference made an unsuccessful attempt to substitute a representative of their own choice.

The friends of the trade unions were so successful that

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8 "The"Sheffield outrages" were a series of acts of violence directed against blacklegs." Cole, Short History of the British Working Class Movement, II, 97.
9 Ibid, II, 100.
the majority of the Royal Commission favored their legalisation and a minority—which, of course, included Hughes and Harrison—proposed the complete removal of "all special legal discriminations against the workers..."10 But the Liberal government introduced no legislation, and agitation only produced a temporary act in 1869. The unions continued their pressure, and 1871 at last produced a bill. The status proposed for the unions was satisfactory, but heavy penalties were provided against practically every means of action to which a union would naturally resort in case of a strike or lock-out. The trade unionists did their utmost, but the only concession secured was the division of the single bill into two—the Trade Union Bill, which dealt with the question of status, and the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, which listed the penalties for such activities as picketing. Prosecutions and convictions soon followed, and the trade unionists commenced a determined campaign to secure a new bill. This was not secured until after the change of government in 1874, when the Conservatives passed the famous Labour Laws of 1875. Under them, as Cole expresses it, "the Trade Unions secured a charter which appeared, until the Taff Vale decision of 1901, to give them adequate legal status and immunity in the conduct of industrial disputes."11

It must be made perfectly clear there was no faintest suggestion of Socialism about this prolonged struggle on the part of the workers. Nor did the large number of trade


11 Ibid.
unionists who favored political action have any intention of forming a new independent labour party. Political action to them simply meant an agitation to persuade Parliament to pass legislation in their favor. There was a growing feeling that a few working men in the House of Commons would be useful, but the trade unionists were Liberals and Conservatives like other folk. "Laisser-faire," the Webbs say, "was the political and social creed of the Trade Union leaders of this time. Up to 1885 they undoubtedly represented the views current among the rank and file." The Labour Laws seem to have spread a comfortable impression abroad with regard to the unions. Flattering contrasts were drawn between the comparative peacefulness with which they had been secured, and the tumult such a situation would have most likely produced on the continent. "Never has a great agitation been more admirably conducted, in peace and without disturbance, to a successful issue," says a writer in the "Fortnightly" in 1875. "Politically it is an example of infinite value, showing how a true cause may prevail, in the face of overwhelming opposition, by legitimate and lawful means. Nothing that has happened for many years has tended so much to secure the peaceful development of our civilisation and progress."

It was upon this quiet scene that the Socialists intruded. Their arrival had no immediate effect, because the variety of Socialism first preached in England made no great appeal to the British temperament. Furthermore, the Social Democratic

12 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 370.
Federation was not friendly to the trade unions. It issued a manifesto in November 1884, which revealed a hostile attitude which was maintained for about ten years. It accused the unions of being in alliance with capital; declared that they included only a small percentage of the workers yet claimed to speak for all; and accused them of being blind to the misery of the masses. Worst of all, the unions had grasped neither the necessity for revolution nor the futility of mere reform. Higher wages and shorter hours were the heights of their ambition.\(^{14}\)

As long as Socialism maintained this attitude its progress amongst trade unionists of the old school was slow, for the Socialists were too weak in numbers and influence to gain much by a direct assault. But the unionists were undoubtedly much impressed by their activity amongst the unemployed, which reached its height in 1886-1887. The great demonstrations organized by the Socialists, the trial and acquittal of the S. D. F. leaders—Hyndman, Burns, Champion and Williams—after the riot in February 1886, and "Bloody Sunday" in 1887 were all excellent advertising. Socialism as a consequence had made some progress by 1888, especially among the unskilled labourers and the unemployed. But it had also gained what the Webbs call "an important body of recruits" among the members of the great amalgamated societies.\(^{15}\)

Socialism also received important assistance during these years from another source. Poverty is the fundamental problem

\(^{14}\) Beer, History of British Socialism, II, 271. 
\(^{15}\) Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 389.
which the Socialist declares can and must be solved. To him it furnishes unanswerable evidence that something is radically and intolerably wrong with the existing social order. During the 'eighties the actual extent and character of poverty in Great Britain was being revealed. Investigations were under way in various cities, the most famous being those conducted by Rowntree in York, and the much vaster undertaking of Booth in London. The first report of the latter was not published until 1889, but the public had gained a general idea of the true state of affairs. As early as 1883 a Royal Commission on the Housing of the Poor had been appointed, but the legislation which followed its report was woefully inadequate. Living conditions amongst the poor furnished the subject-matter for articles in the periodicals of the time. Of special interest, in view of subsequent events, were two articles by Beatrice Potter, who in 1892 was to become Mrs. Sidney Webb. The first appeared in October 1887, was entitled "The Dock Life of East London", and gave a vivid picture of the working class there. The second, on "East London Labour", followed in August 1888, and revealed conditions among the sweated trades in the East End.16

It was while the popular mind was thus being stirred that the Socialists brought to a climax their activities among the unskilled labourers. The latter were unorganized, and therefore helpless victims of the evils which arose from sweating and sub-contracting. Only the formation of trade unions could cure

16 The articles appeared in the "Nineteenth Century". Cf. 22 (1887), 483-499; and 24 (1888), 161-183.
this, and a movement towards this end commenced, led in some instances by Socialists but in others by leading spirits among the labourers themselves. Ben Tillett—not at the time a Socialist—after making an unsuccessful effort to start a union among the London dockers in 1886, met with success when he made a second attempt in July 1887. A year later came the first of a series of strikes destined to become historic. Encouraged by Mrs. Besant—a Fabian—the match girls in the Bryant and May factory struck in July 1888—"without funds, without organization and without leaders"; as Webb expressed it in 1889. The prospect seemed hopeless, but Mrs. Besant and others organized a union and so roused public opinion that the company was in a fortnight compelled to grant the workers' demands. The event marked what Webb called a "significant new development in labour disputes"—that is to say, "the victory of the weak through the general public sympathy with their demands." 

The following year Tom Mann, Ben Tillett, John Burns and Will Thorne assisted the gas workers to organize, and the men soon after demanded an eight-hour in place of a twelve-hour day, and secured it without even a stoppage of work except in one case. But it is the London Dock Strike which makes the year 1889 memorable. It commenced with a minor dispute on August 12. By the 15th ten thousand men were out, and the tie-up was complete in a week. The struggle continued for a

17 The Book of the Labour Party, I, 66.  
19 Ibid.
month, but ended successfully on September 14. The men's demands were reasonable, the most important being for steadier employment and a somewhat higher wage. Public opinion came to their support and undoubtedly made victory possible, as it prevented the dock companies from importing strike-breakers and starving the men into submission. The financial support given the strikers was extraordinary, the contributions received reaching the astonishing total of £48,736, much of which came from Australia. Monster demonstrations and processions were held during the strike, public opinion was thoroughly aroused, and widespread publicity was given to aspects of the labour question which had hitherto escaped popular notice.

The result of the movement of which the dock strike was the culmination was twofold. First, it led to the formation of a large number of trade unions among the unskilled labourers, the membership in which rose to 200,000 within a year. These organizations constituted what was called the New Unionism, and their characteristics might be deduced by the circumstances under which they appeared. Their membership was comprehensive in many cases. Benefit features were as a rule avoided because of the absolute necessity of keeping dues at a minimum. They were essentially "trade-protection societies." The Webbs quote as a typical illustration of

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21 Australia sent about two-thirds of the sum. Trade unions were active there at the time, and the London strike "reacted strongly on public sentiment" and "evoked sympathy with working people and a certain social altruism among all classes in the colonies." Cf. Victor S. Clark, The Labour Movement in Australasia, 60-61. (London, 1907).
22 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 405.
their attitude a resolution passed by the General Railway Workers' Union in 1890. It declared "That the Union shall remain a fighting one, and shall not be encumbered with any sick or accident fund." Equally important in view of impending developments was the preference for political action which was widespread amongst the new unions.

The second result of the movement was the opportunity and the prominence it gave to the Socialists. All the credit for organizing the unskilled labourers does not belong to them. They were not responsible for the dock strike, for example, and the dockers neither particularly liked nor trusted them. But when the organization movement got under way they were the experienced leaders and agitators who ably led it to a successful conclusion. Their prestige and influence increased accordingly, and it is particularly important to note that their conduct impressed the middle-class favorably. Socialism "had taken up the cause of an entirely neglected and uncared-for mass of men, for whom the skilled Trade Unionists could do nothing...." It had brought hope to the unskilled, and in spite of their conservative tendencies, the new unions offered a fruitful field for socialist propaganda.

Previous to the dock strike there had been a distinct decline in trade unionism. Writing in 1886, Hyndman pointed out that the number of members represented at the Trades Union Congress had fallen from 1,300,000 in 1872 to only 500,000 in 1885. Unionism was bankrupt, and he believed the workers

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24 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 406.
would soon turn to Socialism. Two years later William Clarke expressed the opinion that the work of the unions was done. "...There are few of these bodies which are now in a flourishing condition as regards either membership or funds," he wrote. "The culmination of trades-unionism may be dated about 1874..." These opinions failed to make due allowance for the inevitable decline in membership which accompanies every industrial depression. Hyndman had carefully chosen for his comparison the peak year of prosperity, and wrote when times were at their worst. Clarke's article appeared before the commencement of the trade revival which was to prove that trade unionism was very far from dead. Undoubtedly the end of the industrial depression was the fundamental reason for the rapid expansion of unionism which came during and after 1889; but other elements influenced the situation the advent of which neither Hyndman nor Clarke could have foreseen.

The first of these was the broadening of the trade union's character so as to include the unskilled labourer—the development of the New Unionism. The new unions, unencumbered by benefit or insurance features, were intended to devote their energies to the defence and improvement of the workers' position. An organization of this type was inevitably harder hit by a crisis than the older unions, the benefit features of which tended to check a serious decline in membership

during difficult periods. But, in spite of fluctuations in membership, the extension of trade unionism to include the unskilled worker was a change of the first importance. Furthermore, the success of the new unions resulted in a great increase not only in their own membership, but in that of the older unions as well. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, for example, had a membership of only 12,000 in 1888, but this had risen to 30,000 by 1891.28

Equally important was the growing predilection for political action, which the new unions did much to stimulate. For they were, as the Webbs point out, "largely political in their aims."29 There seems to be no agreement as to the reason for this tendency, but several contributory causes may be suggested. Until 1885 or thereabouts the programmes of the Liberal party and the Trades Union Congress had in a general way coincided, though this pleasing state of affairs was only made possible by fashioning the Congress's resolutions so that they fitted in with the Liberal intentions.30 This trimming of the trade union sails to suit the Liberal breeze was at last giving rise to an active discontent which was in great part due to the failure of the Gladstone government to give its attention to the question of social reform. The influence of the broadened franchise which was provided by the Bill of 1884 was likewise important. The new voters naturally speculated as to the practical results their new possession might be made to produce. Furthermore, because they had hitherto lacked a vote, they were

29 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 406.
not solidly attached to any particular party. Their inclinations were no doubt in general towards Liberalism and the fascinating Gladstone; but they possessed an interest in measures which had not yet been dulled by a constant conforming to party traditions.

This state of mind gave the Socialists an opportunity of which they were quick to take advantage. They insisted that the working class must act in its own interests, and could place no reliance on upper-class promises. Their influence increased as the Fabian conception of the Socialist's mission spread, and the preaching of a class war was replaced by emphasis upon the efficacy and adequacy of parliamentary action. Socialism no longer taught that the State was an enemy to be conquered and destroyed, but declared it was a means of reform of which the workers should secure control.

Socialism's ambition to penetrate within the trade union movement was realized with the development of the new unions. As noted above, Socialists had in most cases either started the new organizations or captured the leadership of them as soon as they assumed a militant character. The direct assault having failed, they had at last gained admission to the movement as the leaders and spiritual advisers of the New Unionism. The movement as a whole, moreover, could not but admire what the Socialists had accomplished. Nor could its leaders any longer ignore their influence. They were unable, as the Webbs express it, "to denounce the Socialists as a set of outside intriguers when Burns and Mann, now become the
representative working-men Socialists, stood at the head of a body of 200,000 hitherto unorganized workmen."\(^30\)

These results were undoubtedly to some extent the fruit of the activities of the Social Democratic Federation amongst the unemployed in 1886-1887. But the S. D. F. must not receive too much credit. What appealed to the worker was the general message of Socialism, not the Marxist doctrines of that organization. Moreover, the orthodox Federationists continued the policy of hostility to trade unionism which had been enunciated in 1884. John Burns and H..H. Champion are the most prominent examples of a tendency to preach the socialist gospel on an increasingly generous scale which led to many secessions from the doctrinaire S. D. F. Champion was expelled from the Federation in 1887; Burns resigned in 1889, but had long ceased to be contented within the Federation, and was at the time of his resignation not only a member of the London County Council, but also the prospective Liberal candidate for Battersea.

In conclusion, it is essential to make clear the character of the position which the growth of the New Unionism had enabled the Socialists to secure within the trade union movement. It did not mean, in the first place, that any appreciable percentage of the members had become converts to Socialism. In that respect all that can be claimed is that the Socialists' viewpoint had frequently been accepted in a general sort of way. But this was not confined to the trade

\(^{30}\) Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 407.
unionists. It was generally admitted that the extent of poverty was lamentable, and that something should be done about it. Many people went so far as to admit that the workers' share in things should be a larger one. "We are, one and all of us," reads an article in the "Fortnightly" written just after the dock strike, "firmly of the opinion that the time has come for the establishment of such arrangements in the organization of industry as shall ensure that in future labour shall receive an ampler share of the wealth, in the creation of which labour plays so important a part."31

This was a genuine advance, but it was pious and passive rather than militant in character. Beyond such generalizations most unionists did not go. But they were deeply interested in the possibilities of parliamentary action. The movement was becoming increasingly of the opinion that the State was capable of doing much for Labour. But the advocates of industrial action were still plentiful, and the result was a pitched battle which appeared to concern itself with the Eight Hours Bill, but which in reality was a contest between the champions of parliamentary action on the one hand, and of trade union effort on the other.32 In this struggle the Socialists led the battle in favor of political action, and presently advocated a new and radical departure in that direction—the formation of an independent working-class party. The story of this development will be found in the next chapter, but two things must be pointed out here. First,

32 The Book of the Labour Party, I, 70.
when the Socialists appeared within the trade union movement their doctrines did not greatly attract the unionists. They won their leadership not primarily as Socialists, but as champions of parliamentary action. But, secondly, in spite of this, the victory of parliamentary action was very soon to prove itself to have been a victory for Socialism as well.
Although Cole traces the history of working-class political action back to 1830, the modern movement may be said to date from the 'sixties. Both the Reform Bill of 1867, which greatly extended the franchise, and the agitation which was endeavoring to secure a satisfactory legal status for the trade unions, turned the popular attention to parliamentary action. The natural result was the growth of a feeling among the workers that they were entitled to at least a few members of Parliament chosen from their own class. The claim was strenuously opposed on the ground that the House of Commons was above such distinctions; but this the working-class leaders denied. They insisted that Parliament was in reality a class assembly; and "Labour demanded an entry," in Ramsay MacDonald's words, "because it was in the general interest that all classes should be there represented."  

William Newton, a member of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, who was a candidate at Tower Hamlets in 1852, seems to have been the first working man—or, at any rate, the first trade unionist—to stand for Parliament. MacDonald notes,

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however, that George Holyoake "claimed to be the first Labour candidate" when, at the suggestion of John Stuart Mill, he contested the same seat in 1857. These early candidatures are more interesting than important, as they were local efforts in both cases. The real movement for labour representation came a few years later, and was at first concerned with securing a broadening of the franchise, without which labour members could not go to the polls with any hope of success. But the London Trades Council, which had been founded in 1860, and whose declared object was "to watch over the general interests of labour, political and social, both in and out of Parliament," remained apathetic in spite of the efforts of George Odger and George Howell to rouse its interest in a Reform Bill.

Agreement is general that the London Working Men's Association, founded by George Potter and Robert Hartwell in 1866, was "the first body to attempt the organization of the workers as a political force after the fall of Chartism..." Potter was at the time on bad terms with many of the prominent trade union leaders, and his Association was partly intended to be a rival to their stronghold, the London Trades Council. But its purpose was primarily political, and it carried on an agitation for reform until the passing of the Reform Bill in 1867.

This accomplished, it became the advocate of labour

3 MacDonald, A Policy for the Labour Party, 11. Cf. Cole, Short History...,II, 111; also Hutchison, Labour in Politics, 38. Newton ran as a Chartist, and Holyoake was probably the first labour candidate in the modern sense.
5 Ibid, II, 111. 6 Ibid, II, 79.
representation, and in the autumn passed a resolution expressing its intention of taking steps "to procure a direct representation of Labour interests by the return of working men to Parliament." The plan of action it proposed is interesting in view of later developments. It addressed its manifesto, issued in 1867, to organized labour throughout Great Britain. The workers were urged to establish election funds, and unions, councils and co-operative societies were advised to organize their districts so as to aid the election of working-class candidates. The following year a general political levy amongst trade unionists was suggested in Potter's paper, "The Beehive". But the general election of 1868 revealed the weakness of the movement. Hartwell was the only Association candidate, and even he was compelled to retire because funds were inadequate.

There were five other working-class candidates at this election, but only three actually went to the polls. George Howell ran at Aylesbury, and secured 950 votes, as compared with 1772 for the successful Liberal, and 1468 for his Conservative opponent. W. R. Cremer became a candidate at Warwick as a protest against a political pact which assigned

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7 MacDonald, A Policy for the Labour Party, 13. The question of labour representation seems to have aroused much discussion about 1867. Fraser's Magazine, for instance, published an article entitled "Parliamentary Reform: Labour and Capital", which, after discussing the possibility of solving the problem of the relations of labour and capital by parliamentary action, deals with the labour representation problem. It outlines various schemes, one being "that a number of boroughs should be permitted universal suffrage, the representatives from these boroughs being supposed to give their votes in the interests of labour, or at least to uphold these interests in Parliament." Fraser's Magazine, 75 (1867), 7.
one seat to each of the national parties. The vote was 873, 863, and 260 for the Conservative, the Liberal and Cremer respectively. E. O. Greening ran at Halifax, was opposed by two Liberals, but secured 2802 votes. It will be observed that most of the features which were to characterize working-class politics during the ensuing twenty years made their appearance upon this early occasion. A labour candidate had been persuaded to retire in order to avoid splitting the "progressive" vote. Two others had been compelled to withdraw through lack of funds. There were two three-cornered contests which resulted in the election of members who represented only a minority of the voters. One labour aspirant had been frankly opposed by the Liberals in the absence of any Conservative rival. The only important missing feature was a carefully selected labour candidate upon which the Liberals had bestowed an unwilling blessing.

The London Trades Council had been apathetic toward, but not opposed to, labour representation, as George Howell's candidature proves. An increasing anxiety to secure legislation on the trade union status question led to a greater interest in political action. In 1869, moreover, Potter settled his dispute with the other union leaders. This same year the Trades Union Congress, which had been organized only in 1868, first discussed political action as a trade union policy. A resolution in favor of labour representation was passed, and the fact that it was moved by Odger and seconded by Potter

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showed that united action on the question was at last possible. Incidentally both Odger and Potter were candidates at by-elections in 1869, but both retired to avoid splitting the Liberal vote.

The result of this increased interest in parliamentary action was the Labour Representation League. It should be noted that neither this nor the succeeding organization ever contemplated the formation of a separate political party. Their ambition was limited to a desire to see in the House a group of working men who would be able, when occasion arose, to give technical advice on labour problems, and to explain the attitude of the working class. The League's prospectus declared its aim was "to organize fully the strength of the operative classes as an electoral power, so that, when necessary, it may be brought to bear with effect, on any important political, social, or industrial question in the issue of which their interests are involved."9 It further stated that the League's "principal duty will be to secure the return to Parliament of qualified working men..."10 In theory there was no reason why these members should belong to either of the national parties, but in practice the movement was almost exclusively Liberal-Labour. No Conservative-Labour candidate was ever elected.

The Labour Representation League ran its first candidate in a by-election at Southwark early in 1870. George Odger was selected to contest the seat, and, as the official Liberal

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10 Ibid.
refused to withdraw in his favor, described himself as a Radical Working Man. He made an excellent showing, as he secured no less than 4382 votes, compared with 4686 for the victorious Conservative and only 2966 for the Liberal. This near-success gave the League an excellent start in life—"an impetus", in Beer's words, that "made it for a time an influential political body."12

A second by-election was fought at Greenwich in 1873, and the League's candidate again split the opposition sufficiently to ensure a Conservative victory. This result was quite acceptable to the working class politicians, for they saw in it a means of compelling the Liberal party to endorse their candidates. Hutchison gives an interesting quotation from an article which appeared immediately after this election in "The Beehive". It rejoices over the Liberal defeat, and sees no cause for dismay in the fact that the League's activities might place a Conservative government in power; for "workmen have waited so long for justice that seven years of Tory government will seem a trifling addition to the sum total of their endurance if it is a necessary preliminary to an enforcement of their claims."13 Many labour candidates withdrew in spite of this argument. Liberalism had secured a firm hold on the working class, and the old appeal not to split the "progressive" vote proved a powerful one. Furthermore, the trade unions displayed a disappointing lack of enthusiasm, and, above all, financial resources were woefully inadequate.

11 Cole states that "The Liberal withdrew in favour of Odger towards the close of the poll, but too late to prevent a Conservative victory." Short History..., II, 113.
13 Hutchison, Labour in Politics, 44.
Odger and Howell themselves showed a deference for Liberal wishes. The former withdrew when nominated at Bristol after his defeat at Southwark, and Howell followed his example at Norwich in 1871.

The unsatisfactory character of the 1871 Labour Laws caused the trade unions to take an increased interest in labour representation, and the prosperity of the League reached its height with the general election of 1874. Fourteen\(^{14}\) working-class candidates went to the polls, including a number put forward by the Miners' National Association, largely as a result of the efforts of Alexander Macdonald, its politically-minded president. The Labour Representation League, which based its hopes to a great extent upon persuading the Liberals to endorse working-class candidates was encouraged to find them slightly more friendly on this occasion. Four of the fourteen labour candidates were allowed a straight fight with the Conservatives, and two of them were elected. Macdonald and a fellow miner, Thomas Burt, won seats at Morpeth and Stafford respectively, and thereby became the first working-class members of Parliament. Both, it should be remembered, were ranked as Liberals in the House.

The election of two members was a victory, but hardly a sufficiently striking one to rouse much enthusiasm. The consequent decline in the Labour Representation League's fortunes was further assisted by Disraeli's highly satisfactory

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14 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 680, footnote; but there seems to be no agreement on this number. Beer, History of British Socialism, II, 224, says 12 candidates ran, while Cole, Short History of the British Working Class Movement, II, 114 raises this to fifteen. Hutchison, Labour in Politics, 45, lists 12 constituencies as those contested by labour candidates.
Labour Laws of 1875, and by the attention to social legislation which was a characteristic of his years in office. But the working class provedsingularly ungrateful, and no amount of Conservative deference to their wishes could lure them from the Liberal camp. Moreover, the Liberals were beginning to realize that some concession would have to be made to the growing demand for labour representation, and the day of the selected and approved Liberal-Labour working-class candidate was dawning. But the election of 1880 came before the sun had more than half risen. Few working-class candidates appeared, though Macdonald and Burt both held their seats and were joined by Henry Broadhurst, who was elected for Stoke-on-Trent. But this success was not sufficient to revive the now feeble Labour Representation League, and it ceased to exist about 1881.

Before the character and significance of the Liberal-Labour member can be properly understood it is necessary to review the political policy of organized labour, particularly as it was reflected in the Trades Union Congress. George Howell states that it was at the second Congress, in 1869, that "the question was first mooted of Labour Representation in Parliament, as a distinctive policy of the unions."15 It is surprising to learn that "bodies other than trades' unions were represented....without challenge"16 on that occasion,

16 Ibid, 406.
including various political organizations. This practice continued until 1872, when "twelve delegates were sent by political bodies, a system then for the first time authoritatively condemned..."17

The early Congresses18 were much preoccupied by the fight for a satisfactory Trades Union Bill. The unsatisfactory measures passed in 1871 were discussed at great length at the Congress held that year. Most important of all, a Parliamentary Committee was appointed, which was to do all in its power to secure the revision and extension of legislation in accordance with the wishes of the trade unions. It consisted originally of five members, but was enlarged to ten in 1872. The Committee quickly assumed what were to be its distinctive character and functions. It was composed of leading trade union officials who were almost invariably re-elected from year to year, especially during the period 1875 to 1889.19 It presented an elaborate annual report at the Congress which reviewed its activities in the interests of labour legislation, and outlined the questions which were expected to receive attention during the next parliamentary session. This report was discussed at length by the Congress, which usually incorporated its views in a series of resolutions which it was hoped would influence Parliament as well as form a guide for the Committee's work during the ensuing year. The Congress also

17 Howell, "Trades' Union Congresses and Social Legislation", Contemporary Review, 56 (1889), 408.
18 The first Congress was held at Manchester in 1868. Annual sessions were held thereafter except in 1870. Two Congresses met in 1875 owing to the change in the time of meeting from January to the fall.
19 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 361, footnote.
at times gave definite instructions to its Committee on certain points. In 1872, for instance, Howell tells us that it was "instructed to watch carefully the proposed legislation with respect to Friendly Societies," and "also to agitate for better factory inspectors." 20

The programme of the Parliamentary Committee, which in a general way reflected the political opinions of the Trades Union Congress, though liberal in general principles, was in its concrete proposals remarkably conservative. The programme professed a desire for greater democracy, but as late as 1882 and 1883 resolutions in favor of manhood suffrage were heavily defeated. 21 Similarly, the Congress in theory favored all measures which would tend to enable industrious workers to rise out of the working class; it sought a more general regulation of working conditions in many trades. But in the actual measures it proposed the Congress reflected the views of its leaders, who were converts to "the economic Individualism which at this time dominated the Liberal party." 22 Even its apparently advanced proposals were revealed as short-sighted when analysed. For example, the Congress was in favor of every wage earner owning his house—a state of affairs which would destroy one of the workers' chief weapons, their mobility.

Howell and the Webbs are the champions of the opposing opinions as to the influence the Trades Union Congress and its Committee exercised on the House of Commons. The former, writing in 1889, gives an imposing list of fifty-three measures

20 Howell, "Trades' Union Congresses and Social Legislation", Contemporary Review, 56 (1889), 408.
21 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 368.
22 Ibid, 371.
passed during the previous twenty years, which he describes as "a bare record" of legislation "more or less promoted by, or the direct result of, the action of the Trades' Unions and their Congresses, and more recently of Labour Representation in Parliament..."23 To this list he insists that many revisions of previous legislation should be added. The Webbs, on the other hand, believe that the trade union movement had little influence on Parliament, especially during the 1876-85 period. They accuse the unionists of having lacked both constructive proposals, and the power to secure the adoption of such revisions as they advocated. "To the great consolidating Factory Bill of 1878," the Webbs point out, "they found only five small amendments to propose; and of these only one was carried."24 Trade union influence did not increase to any important extent even after the defeat of the Conservatives, and the Webbs declare that "the resolutions of the Trades Union Congress on questions of general politics between 1880 and 1884 were successfully pressed on the Legislature only in so far as they happened to coincide with the proposals of the Liberal party."25 Upon only three occasions do they believe trade union influence to have been of real importance. The Employers' Liability Act of 1880 "called out the full energies"26 of the union leaders; in 1882 they did much to secure the appointment of the first practical working man as a factory inspector; and

23 Howell, "Trades' Union Congresses and Social Legislation", Contemporary, 56 (1889), 416. Howell was himself a member of the House when this article was written.
24 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 371.
25 Ibid, 373.
26 Ibid.
the Parliamentary Committee was able "to render effective help" when the Redistribution Bill of 1885 was being drafted. The Webbs undoubtedly have the stronger case, and it is not difficult to discover the general causes of this comparative impotence on the part of both the Congress and the Committee. The sectionalism which characterized the trade union movement in the 1875-1885 period, and the consequently artificial nature of the impression of unity which the Congress conveyed to the public have already been indicated. Under the circumstances there could be little discussion of fundamentals and less upon controversial matters of policy. Disagreements were ignored and left to fester beneath the surface of the movement; and the Congress is therefore quite fairly described as having been "little more than an annual gathering of Trade Union officials, in which they delivered, with placid unanimity, their views on labour legislation and labour politics." It is no wonder that an assembly of this nature, incapable as it frequently was of knowing its own mind, failed to exercise much influence upon the House of Commons.

The Parliamentary Committee failed in several respects to prove to be an entirely satisfactory medium between the Congress and Parliament. It declined at times to be governed by the instructions and resolutions of the Congress—an attitude not infrequently assumed by a practically permanent and experienced executive or committee towards the annual assembly it represents. The Parliamentary Committee either ignored the

27 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 373.
28 Cf. supra, 65.
29 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 358.
expressions of opinion with which it disagreed, delayed action upon the questions involved, or treated them as being nothing more than the fad of particular delegates. For example, the Congress passed a resolution declaring itself in favor of land nationalization in 1888, but the Committee declined to accept this as a serious expression of opinion, and accordingly made no change in its programme. It is difficult to estimate the extent to which this independence was due to Henry Broadhurst, Secretary of the Committee from 1875 until 1889. The Webbs ascribe much of such influence as the Committee possessed to his "skilful guidance and indefatigable activity;" but Broadhurst was a strong Liberal. As the only means of action available to the Committee was lobbying members and interviewing ministers, its partisan nature was not an advantage. Broadhurst could expect little from the Conservatives, and could not well oppose the Liberals. The consequence was that any deference paid to the trade unions' wishes was due to the fact that they incidentally coincided with those of the Liberal party.

The extent to which both Congress and Committee were attached to the old political traditions is strikingly illustrated by their attitude towards labour representation. Previous to the Labour Laws of 1875 some interest was taken in the question, but though the Trades Union Congress passed favorable resolutions, nothing was done. By 1874, however,

30 The Committee's independence is best illustrated by its attitude in 1886-88 in regard to the calling of the International Trade Union Congress—a subject which does not concern the present study. Cf. Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 396-397.
31 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 363.
several unions had actually voted money to help support candidates, and the miners, led by Alexander Macdonald, had succeeded in electing two members that year. But the Labour Laws were followed by a decade in which most of the trade union leaders succumbed to the "glamour which Gladstone exercised over all the Progressives of those days," and the cause of labour representation declined. It suffered further as the collapse of prosperity gradually sapped the strength of Macdonald's miners' union, although both he and Burt retained their seats in 1880. As noted above, they were joined in that year by Henry Broadhurst, the importance of whose election will now be apparent.

A revival of interest in labour representation took place during the next five years, but the Trades Union Congress remained apathetic. In 1881 it instructed the Parliamentary Committee to do all in its power to assist working-class candidates, but nothing was done. A motion favoring the establishment of a fund to assist labour candidates was defeated by a vote of 64 to 43 at the 1882 Congress, and met with a similar fate in 1884 and 1885. "The most Congress would do in 1885," Cole says, "was to urge the Unions, on the motion of John Wilson, the Durham Miners' leader, to organize politically themselves."

In spite of the Congress's lack of enthusiasm eleven

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32 Hutchison, Labour in Politics, 44.
33 Ibid, 45.
35 Ibid.
working-class representatives were elected in the 1885 election, six of them being miners. Macdonald had died in 1881; but Burt again retained his seat, and Broadhurst was also successful. It was the first election since the extension of the franchise in 1884, and was also rendered important by the appearance of three socialist candidates representing the Social Democratic Federation. It is true that two of these together polled only fifty-nine votes, and that the third, John Burns, received only 598 at Nottingham. But their appearance was significant, though premature.

The general election of 1886 reduced the number of working-class members to ten. It is essential to make it clear once again that this group acted in no way as a separate party. "They all sat and voted as Liberals," Cole says; "and Broadhurst accepted office as Under-Secretary to the Home Office in the Liberal Government." Gladstone had captured their imagination, and it is significant that the movement towards a separate labour party gained momentum only after his retirement. But Broadhurst’s appointment may be taken as evidence that the Liberals had accepted the Liberal-Labour group as a permanent feature of the House, and even the Trades Union Congress was evidently impressed. At long last it was persuaded to act by T. R. Threlfall, and in 1886 set up a Labour Electoral Committee, the aim of which was to increase the number of working-class members in the House. It was to

work in conjunction with the Parliamentary Committee, the labour members already in the House, and with "friends of Labour Representation throughout the country." Threlfall himself tells us that it did good work, but lacked a platform; and that at the time of the 1887 Congress it decided to rename itself the Labour Electoral Association, and start forth "as a distinct organization, with a very advanced programme, agreed to at a largely attended informal meeting of the delegates."

It was at this point that Liberal-Labourism was first seriously challenged by the idea of a new political party. It should be noted that until that idea appeared the Liberal-Labour attitude was a sound one. Its supporters were convinced that a new party was not only an impossible dream, but that it was both unnecessary and undesirable. Thomas Burt, one of the first two working-class members elected in 1874, explained his position in an article in the "Contemporary" about this time. He shared with many a deep regret that the class representation question had to be raised at all. He was nevertheless convinced that a group of working men should be in the House, and insisted that "it is not only defensible, but it is necessary, that the opinions, the interests, yea, even the prejudices, of the workmen should find forcible expression in Parliament." But in spite of its necessity "there are great, almost insurmountable, impediments in the way of labour representation." The chief of these was the heavy expense

37 The Book of the Labour Party, I, 58.
40 Ibid, 681.
involved in elections. Burt also advocated the payment of members, though he noted that experience in Europe and the United States showed that it did not necessarily result in a large number of labour members. Lastly, he expressed his opposition to the separate party idea. He contended that "on purely labour questions" the working-class members "are actually, as they ought to be, a party; while on general politics they rightly act with their natural allies, the Radicals..." Obviously, Burt did not consider the separate party to be within the bounds of practical politics, and, that granted, he was correct when he contended that since they were only a handful, the labour members' "true policy is to co-operate with that party with whose opinions they are in general agreement." For they are "utterly powerless, except in so far as they act with or secure the co-operation of others."

This explains the character of Liberal-Labourism, and the fashion in which it anchored itself firmly to the Liberal party. As Broadhurst, its secretary and guiding spirit, held office in a Liberal government, it is not surprising that the Parliamentary Committee declined in prestige and importance, for it lost its independence of thought. Moreover, it remained distinctly conservative; and though it was gradually compelled to drop measures which had become antiquated, it declined to adopt many of the new proposals intended to replace them. The result, in the opinion of the Webbs, was that the Committee lost "all intellectual leadership in the

42 Ibid, 691.
Trade Union world," and that "The official Trade Union programme from 1885 to 1889 became steadily more colourless.\textsuperscript{43} The Labour Electoral Association could do little to mend this situation, for in spite of its claim to possess an advanced programme, it was in reality Liberal-Radical at most.\textsuperscript{44} It formed branches in various parts of the country, and in 1888 its affiliated membership reached no less than 600,000; but "its practice", as Cole explains, "was to secure the adoption of its candidates by local Liberal and Radical Associations, so that they not only sat, but stood, as Liberals. ... It opposed three-cornered fights, and"--most significant from the present viewpoint--"refused to support independent Labour candidates against Liberals.\textsuperscript{44-A} No wonder it did not long survive the Liberal defeat of 1895.\textsuperscript{45}

The first attempt to create an independent working-class political party in Great Britain was made as early as 1872, and was the result of Marx's International. Marx did his utmost to prevent the formation of a British Federal Council, because he foresaw that it would quickly fall under the influence of the moderate British trade unionists; but he was finally compelled to consent to its creation in 1871. The following year this Council attempted to form a new party, but the leaders could not agree and the movement collapsed. A programme was drawn up, however, and its eight points are

\textsuperscript{43} Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 397.
\textsuperscript{44} Cf. The Book of the Labour Party, I, 58.
\textsuperscript{44-A} Cole, Short History of the British Working Class Movement, II, 143.
\textsuperscript{45} The Metropolitan branch of the Electoral Association for a time tended to be independent in viewpoint, when, for about a year, it was under the influence of H. H. Champion and Tom Mann. Cf. infra,\textsuperscript{03}. 
worth recording. It demanded adult suffrage, proportional representation, free, compulsory and secular education, the disestablishment and disendowment of all State Churches, the abolition of hereditary titles and privileges, self-government for Ireland and a federal constitution for the Empire, the nationalization of land, mines, and the means of production, and, lastly, a State Bank with a monopoly of the note issue.  

This still-born effort was a British by-product of Marx's socialist movement, and the idea of a new working-class political party owes its reappearance in Great Britain to the revival of Socialism. The Social Democratic Federation aimed to be a political socialist party, opposed to the two historic parties, but organized, like them, for the conquest of seats in Parliament." But the failure of the Marxian doctrines to attract the British temperament resulted in what Halevy has aptly termed a "twofold destitution, numerical and financial." In 1885 the Federation accepted funds from a Conservative source—the famous "Tory gold"—and ran two candidates in London. This manoeuvre proved to be not only a serious tactical error, but revealed an impotence at the polls which the fair showing made by the Federation's third candidate, John Burns, did little to conceal. But in spite of this failure the need for a new political party was being increasingly felt by 1887. Engels, the friend of Marx, declared at that time that the formation of a labour party was "the immediate

48 Ibid,
question"; Pease, the Fabian, declared that "the chief aim" of the Fabian plan is the formation of a distinct Labour party in Parliament; 49 and Keir Hardie, appearing for the first time at the Trades Union Congress in the fall of the year objected to the fashion in which the working-class members worked with the Liberal party. The Marxians accomplished little because of the hostility which the Social Democratic Federation displayed towards the trade unions, and also because its electoral policy, uncompromising in theory, was uncertain in practice. The Fabians busied themselves for some years with the policy of permeation. Keir Hardie proved to be the nucleus about which the independent labour party developed.

Clayton declares that Henry Hyde Champion and not Keir Hardie should be honored as the creator of the movement which in due course produced that party. "It was Champion," he contends, "who discerned that the Socialist League with its non-parliamentary policy and Anarchist sympathies would never command the support of the British people, always strongly attached to parliamentary institutions; that the S. D. F. in its devotion to the pure gospel of Marx made no appeal to Trade Unionists anxious for small but pressing changes that would better their condition; that Labour Electoral Associations in the control of the Liberal Trade Unionists would accomplish nothing that would diminish the power of the Capitalist." 50

Champion was an ex-army officer, and had been a member of the first executive of the Social Democratic Federation. He

49 Beer, History of British Socialism, II, 298.
50 Clayton, Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain, 69.
was an active agitator and was one of the four socialist leaders arrested, but acquitted, after the unemployed riot of February 1886. The policy and disappointing progress of the S. D. F. left him dissatisfied, strained relations with Hyndman resulted, and he was expelled from the Federation in 1887. Next to John Burns he was to be the most active leader in the London dock strike, and like him he wished to broaden the socialist message and appeal. But, whereas Burns' thoughts developed in the direction of Liberalism, those of Champion carried him towards a new independent labour party.

After his expulsion Champion became a member of the staff of the "Nineteenth Century", but at the same time was actively engaged in propaganda in the interests of the proposed new party. Meanwhile Keir Hardie had also arrived at the conclusion that independent working-class representation was essential, but he had reached it by a strikingly different route. He had first attracted attention as an agitator working for the formation of trade unions amongst his fellow workers in the Scottish mines. His efforts met with success in 1886, with the organization of the Ayrshire Miners' Union and the Scottish Miners' Federation. Hardie was organizing secretary of the former, and also secretary of the latter. This task accomplished he was attracted by the possibility of making some practical use of the political power which the Franchise Act of 1884 had given to most of the members of the new unions. The majority of them were attracted to Liberalism and its
commanding leader, Gladstone; and though some doubts were felt as to the sincerity of the party's interest in labour, the way in which it had made room for such an advanced radical as Cunningham Graham, after his election in 1886, was reassuring. Hardie, however, was not quite alone in his growing conviction that the labour representation provided by the Liberal-Labour plan was inadequate. As early as May 1887 he had succeeded in persuading various miners' demonstrations to pass a resolution "That in the opinion of this meeting, the time has come for the formation of a Labour Party in the House of Commons, and we hereby agree to assist in returning one or more members to represent the miners of Scotland at the first available opportunity." Hardie himself became a prospective candidate. It is important to note that he had not reached his conclusions by way of Socialism, but through the conviction that labour representation was both insufficient and unsatisfactory in character. "I am not specially anxious to go to Parliament," he said at this time, "but I am anxious and determined that the wants and wishes of the working classes shall be made known and attended to there." He was convinced that legislation in the interests of the workers would never be effective until they themselves had a voice in its framing. Accidents in the mines, for example, were in most cases preventable, but they would continue until the miners' case could be presented in

52 Ibid.
such a fashion as to compel the mine owners by legislation to make the expenditures necessary for their prevention. It was in this frame of mind that Hardie attended his first Trades Union Congress in 1887, as the representative of the Ayrshire miners. At this Congress he advocated the formation of a new political party, to the support of which the entire Labour Movement should rally, but the proposal received scant attention.

A few months later Hardie became a candidate in a by-election in Mid-Lanark. Champion, who had been speaking in Scotland on behalf of the Land and Labour League, rallied to his support and Clayton states that he financed Hardie's candidature. 54 The Liberals declined to endorse Hardie and did their utmost to persuade him to withdraw, even going so far as to offer him a safe seat and a £300 annuity if he would do so, but he was determined to go to the poll. He was supported, among others, by Robert Smillie and also by G. B. Clark, who in 1872 had helped to draw up the independent party programme prepared at that time. 55 He was also endorsed by the London Scottish Home Rule Association, and as a consequence came for the first time into contact with Ramsay MacDonald, who was then its secretary. But the electorate was scarcely prepared for open defiance to both the traditional parties, and Hardie polled only 617 votes. 56

54 Clayton, Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain, 69. 55 Cf. supra, 98. 56 Stewart's figure. Cf. J. Keir Hardie, 43. Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 682, raises this to 619; while both Beer, History of British Socialism, II, 299, and Cole, Short History of the British Working Class Movement, II, 156, (cont.)
This result Champion considered very encouraging, and in an article published in the "Nineteenth Century" soon after the election declared it could "appear small only to those who do not realise the circumstances and who fail to compare it with the result of similar action in previous instances." He reviewed the general political situation, remarked upon the increasing public concern regarding social matters, and expressed the opinion that "the times are ripe, and a field is open, for the action of a Party which places the rights of labour before everything else, and while it aims ultimately to secure to the worker the full fruits of his toil, pursues the immediate amelioration of the conditions of his life by a practical policy based on sound economics, and requiring for its speedy triumph only the action of legitimate forces ready to hand."  

Stewart states that he polled 712 votes. Stewart states that Hardie was endorsed by the Labour Electoral Association (cf. J. Keir Hardie, 39), but Cole (Short History..., II, 156) says its leaders opposed him. Champion was at the time attempting to use the Metropolitan section of the Association as a nucleus for a National Labour Party, and Stewart states that it assumed that name during the election campaign (cf. Stewart, J. Keir Hardie, 39). J. L. Mahon, who supported Champion's efforts in London, speaking of the Association says that "Under Mr. Champion's influence an energetic and independent line of action was pursued for about twelve months, including the Deptford and Mid-Lanark bye-elections in 1888." ("The Labour Party and the General Election", National Review, 23 (1894), 637). Probably the Metropolitan section endorsed Hardie, but he would nevertheless be opposed by the Association's Liberal-Labour leaders.  

58 Ibid, 85.
Champion had travelled far since he joined the Social Democratic Federation, and he here advocated a course of action which was in accordance with the views of all but the staunch Liberals among the Fabians. The practical experiment at Mid-Lanark increased his faith in the plan, and in September 1888 he published the first issue of the "Labour Elector" which advocated the immediate formation of an independent working-class party. Until it ceased publication in 1890 the "Labour Elector" energetically supported the project, insisted upon the inadequacy of the Liberal-Labour representation plan, and attacked the trade union leaders of the older school who opposed political action. Although Champion gave financial assistance to both Hardie and John Burns at the time of the 1892 election he does not figure as prominently in the movement to create a new party after 1890 as he did before that date. The future lay with Keir Hardie and the Independent Labour party. Champion was never connected with that organization and emigrated to Australia in 1894.

If the Mid-Lanark by-election increased Champion's faith in independent labour politics, it also clarified and crystallized that of Hardie. Hardie would certainly have made no objection if the Liberal Association had seen fit to endorse his candidature. It was their failure to do so which labelled him definitely as an independent labour candidate. The situation in many respects resembled a test case, and, as

59 Cf. footnote, infra, 107.
60 Clayton, Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain, 69.
Hardie's biographer notes, "the election had cleared the air, and had settled one thing for ever, the impossibility of a Labour Party within the Liberal Party." It is that which gives the Mid-Lanark by-election "its permanent place in the history of the Labour Movement."61

Once thoroughly convinced of its necessity, Hardie lost no time in organizing a new party. A small, preliminary gathering in May was followed by a conference at Glasgow in August 1888, at which the Scottish Parliamentary Labour party was organized. Cunningham Graham, the ultra-radical who had been elected in 1886 as a Liberal but who had progressed into Socialism, was made honorary president, Shaw Maxwell became chairman, and Hardie secretary. A programme was prepared which in addition to such purely political reforms as adult suffrage, triennial parliaments and the payment of members, included such socialistic measures as free education, a national banking system, state ownership of railways, waterways and tramways, a cumulative income tax and the nationalization of land and minerals.63 In view of this it is surprising to learn that Hardie was not at the time a declared Socialist, though he announced his conversion in the following November.64 The new party's programme was ridiculed in the press but is historically interesting because it marked the junction between a labour representation movement which was anchored in the working class with a distinctly Fabian Socialism.

61 Stewart, J. Keir Hardie, 43.
62 Stewart's statement. The Webbs say Graham was chairman of the party. Cf. History of Trade Unionism, 682.
63 Cf. Beer, History of British Socialism, 299-300. The programme is given in full.
indicated, as Stewart points out, that its authors "were feeling their way towards a statement of Socialist aims which, by its very practicality, would be acceptable to their fellow workmen."64

The year 1889 is of peculiar interest in the history of the Labour party. It saw the publication of the "Fabian Essays in Socialism", which gave expression to the new conception of Socialism which was destined to spread rapidly in Great Britain and to influence profoundly the policy and programme of the working-class party. It witnessed the London dock strike, which stirred both public opinion and the public conscience, and gave a tremendous impetus to the movement which created the New Unionism, and enabled the Socialists to secure a hold within the trade union world. The idea of an independent working-class party had taken concrete form the previous year, and its supporters were already manifesting an interest in a Socialism which increasingly resembled that of the Fabians—an evolutionary Socialism based upon reason and conscience, not a cataclysmic faith built upon authority. Lastly, there was a developing kinship between the leaders of the new party and those of the new Socialism and the New Unionism, and 1889 is again memorable because it was in the fall of that year, at the Trades Union Congress, that these leaders of the new order commenced their conflict with the officials of the old.

The clash was not unexpected. Since 1885 the Congress had been "losing its decorous calm, and gradually becoming the

64 Stewart, J. Keir Hardie, 45.
battle-field of contending principles and rival leaders."65 George Howell, after reviewing the accomplishments of the T. U. C., spoke of the peril ahead. "It is said," he wrote in August 1889, "that there will be a struggle for supremacy on the part of the Socialists in directing the policy of the Congress."66 When it materialized it took the unwise and unstatesmanlike form of a personal attack upon the character and conduct of the old officials, in particular those of the Parliamentary Committee.67 The result was the complete defeat of the assailants, Broadhurst being upheld by 177 out of the 188 delegates.

The year which passed before the new leaders returned to the attack at the 1890 Congress brought many changes. The new unions expanded rapidly and the Socialists substituted an attack upon policy for that upon personalities which had proven so unfortunate the previous year. Sounder tactics and a stronger case won a victory in 1890 which practically gave the leadership of the labour movement to the Socialists and their allies. The eight-hour day had for some years been the question upon which the rival leaders tested their strength. The 1890 Congress not only declared in its favor by a vote of 193 to 155, but also expressed its approval of parliamentary action as a means of securing it. The resolution declared that the Congress, "while recognizing the power and influence

65 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 359.
67 The "Labour Elector", Champion's paper, was the chief medium for the attack. Cf. Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 400, text and footnote.
of trade organizations...is of opinion that the speediest and best method to obtain this reduction for the workers generally is by Parliamentary enactment." The Parliamentary Committee was instructed "to take immediate steps for the furtherance of this object."68 The Congress passed no less than sixty resolutions, the majority of which constituted a striking confession of faith in political as opposed to trade union action. Burns declared that 45 out of the 60 "were nothing more nor less than direct appeals to the State and Municipalities of this country to do for the workman what Trade Unionism, 'Old' and 'New', has proved itself incapable of doing."69

The period between 1889 and 1892 was a prosperous one for the trade unions. The growth of the Miners' Federation, which had been founded in 1888 by champions of the set wage as opposed to the sliding-scale system, illustrates this clearly. Its initial membership was only 36,000, but by 1893 this had risen to 200,000. The rapid growth of the New Unionism has been already referred to and the older unions shared in the increase. Statistics are lacking, but Cole estimates that the total trade union membership in Great Britain rose from not more than 750,000 in 1888 to over 1,500,000 in 1892.70 This comparatively sudden doubling of trade union membership naturally swamped the old school unionists beneath a flood of new unions or new recruits within their own organizations. The victory at the 1890 Congress was a reflection of this

68 W. V. Osborne, Sane Trade Unionism, 82. (London, N.D.).
69 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 408-409.
70 Cole, Short History of the British Working Class Movement, II, 163.
situation, and the increase in membership which continued after that date consolidated the position of the new leaders and of their political policy.

A second characteristic of the period was the appearance of scores of labour clubs and socialist societies, especially in the north. It will be remembered that it was during these years that the provincial Fabian branches sprang into existence. The Scottish Labour party shared in this expansion and about thirty branches were organized. Even more important, the S. L. P. proved to be an example which was followed in different parts of England, especially in Yorkshire, Lancashire and the North-East. Special interest attaches to the Labour Union at Bradford, which was organized as a result of a strike, and is credited by Beer with being "the first independent Labour organization of any size in England." Even more important, the Labour and socialist press. Keir Hardie had founded "The Miner" in 1887, which appeared monthly until the end of 1888, when it was succeeded by the "Labour Leader". Reference has already been made to Champion's "Labour Elector", which from its first issue advocated the formation of an independent working-class party. In addition to these periodicals Mrs. Besant for some time edited a paper called "The Link", the Socialist League issued the "Commonweal", and the Social Democratic Federation broadcasted its views in "Justice". It is true that only the "Labour Elector" and Hardie's "Labour Leader" had much in

71 Stewart, J. Keir Hardie, 72.
72 Beer, History of British Socialism, II, 301.
common, but, as Cole notes, "In all these papers the old Trade Union leaders, and the "Lib-Labs" in Parliament, were fiercely attacked." The "Labour Elector" ceased publication in April 1890, but Joseph Burgess assumed the editorship of the "Workman's Times" in the same year and supported the cause of independent labour representation in its columns. Still more important was the founding of "The Clarion" by Robert Blatchford in 1891. The paper was immediately successful, its circulation increased rapidly, and it was for some years a widely read and influential journal.

The prospects for an independent working-class party were greatly improved by these developments. The predilection of the new trade unionists for political action encouraged its advocates to seek supporters amongst them. The labour clubs and independent societies which had sprung up in numerous districts in many cases provided ready-made local organizations which could be used for election purposes. The support of a friendly press had an important inspirational, as well as a propagandist value. The movement to create an independent party still remained, in Keir Hardie's words, "spontaneous and irregular and without any national cohesion." But in many centres it was gaining strength, and twelve independent candidates ran in the 1892 general election, five of them under the auspices of the Scottish Labour party.

Keir Hardie, who ran at West Ham, was the only one of the twelve elected, though Ben Tillett came near to victory at

73 Cole, Short History of the British Working Class Movement, II, 156.
75 Hardie's figure. I take it for granted it does not include John Burns, who was elected for Battersea.
Bradford. Hardie had been invited to run by the Land Restoration League and supported by various radical and socialist groups, but his election was probably due to the death of the Liberal who was opposing him and to the withdrawal of the Liberal-Labour candidate. But his victory was a notable one nevertheless, as he had made it clear during his campaign that he would remain absolutely independent of all parties if elected. John Burns also won a seat at Battersea, and Havelock Wilson, a militant unionist, was successful at Middlesborough. Twelve more orthodox Liberal-Labour members brought the total number of working-class representatives in the new Parliament to fifteen.

Just as Hardie's candidature in 1888 had crystallized his ideas and led to the founding of the Scottish Labour party, so his election in 1892 convinced him that the time had come to organize working-class politics on a larger scale. In the fall of the year the Trades Union Congress at last passed a resolution in favor of the establishment of a parliamentary fund, and the Parliamentary Committee was instructed to prepare a plan for its collection for the consideration of the next Congress. This resolution was evidence of an increased belief in the necessity of labour representation, as the proposal had been badly defeated in 1891. Moreover, the increasing influence of the local societies which were working for independent representation was shown by the fact that more than forty of the delegates to the 1892 Trades Union Congress were members of

such organizations; "and it was agreed by these," Kair Hardie states, "at an informal conference, to convene a meeting of representatives to consider, and, if possible, agree upon, the formation of a National Independent Labour Party." 77

As a consequence about 120 delegates 78 assembled at Bardford on January 13 and 14, 1893. They represented local organizations all over Great Britain, and included a delegation of five from the Social Democratic Federation and a group of twelve Fabians, who announced that they were present only as visitors. Keir Hardie was chairman. This conference founded the Independent Labour Party, the peculiar character of which must be made clear.

In the first place, although the majority of its creators were Socialists, the initial emphasis was placed upon independent political action and not upon Socialism. The Independent Labour party hoped to recruit an army of voters among the trade unionists and its organizers were fully aware of their conservative tendencies. The new party's name was carefully chosen in order to cause a minimum of apprehension, and its leaders, instead of attacking the unions as the Federation had done, sought to demonstrate their inadequacy and limitations. Membership in the Independent Labour Party was to be regarded as a natural complement to that in a trade union.

But the I. L. P.--as it quickly came to be called-- was

78 Opinions differ as to the exact number; this is Beer's estimate. Cf. History of British Socialism, II, 303. Halevy says 120, but incorrectly dates the conference 1892 (cf. History of the English People in 1895–1905, 120) Cole, Short History..., II, 168, raises this to 124, while Stewart, J. Keir Hardie, raises this to 129.
nevertheless a socialist body. "No difference could be detected between the programmes of the I. L. P. and the S.D.F."

Beer states, but the I. L. P. declined to be doctrinaire and aimed to be above all else practical. Its methods of action were to be three in number. First, it sought to promote "The education of the community in the principles of Socialism." Secondly, it advocated "The industrial and political organization of the workers." Thirdly, it aimed at "The independent representation of Socialist principles on all elective bodies." The lack of definite doctrines made it possible for the I. L. P. to peacefully shelter men of widely divergent opinions. It reduced its required confession of faith to the acceptance of what Keith Hutchison has called "the two vital points—complete independence of the old parties, and a general belief in Socialism."

Such an attitude quite naturally failed to give universal satisfaction. The Marxists considered it much too moderate in tone, and the Federation did not join the new party. The Fabians, as an organization, were not prepared for the definite break with Liberalism which the programme required. Robert Blatchford considered that compromise had been carried too far. But the Independent Labour party was at least a beginning—it was an organization on a national scale championing the cause of independent labour representation. And, although the I. L. P. itself failed to develop into the working-class party it was intended to become, the leading

79 Beer, History of British Socialism, II, 304.
80 From the I. L. P. constitution, revised to 1906.
81 Hutchison, Labour in Politics, 63.
part it was destined to take in clearing the way for the organization of such a party makes its advent a landmark in the history of British labour in politics.
Chapter V
THE LABOUR REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE

The Independent Labour party not only fused into a nation-wide whole the numerous local organizations whose delegates had created it, but rapidly absorbed scores of societies which had not been represented at the initial conference. By the time of the 1894 annual meeting, which was held at Manchester in January, it consisted of no less than 280 branches. Enthusiasm for the I. L. P. overwhelmed the provincial Fabian societies, and only the Liverpool branch and those at the universities remained faithful to Fabianism. The result might well have been strained relations between the parent society in London and the new party; but the former regarded this wholesale desertion with an equanimity which requires explanation.

Clayton has aptly described the Fabian Society as "an intellectual centre, discharging light rather than heat." As previously noted, its wish was to remain a compact group of students, writers and lecturers—a source of expert, accurate information, teeming with ideas and practical suggestions. It frowned upon expansion which would compel it to become more popular in character, and for that reason assumed no responsibility with regard to its branches. Only years of

1 Clayton, Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain, 82.
self-education would have enabled them to rise to the level of the London group. Most of their members had progressed no further than to become convinced believers in the general ideas of Socialism. "In fact", as Pease says, "the local Fabian Societies, with rare exceptions, of which Liverpool was the chief, were from the first "I. L. P." in personnel and policy, and were Fabian only in name."  

The parent society itself had no desire to join the Independent Labour party. Its central purpose in life was to study Socialism—that was the interest which its members had in common. As regarded methods of action they differed widely. One large and energetic group supported the idea of a new working-class party and promptly joined the I. L. P. individually. Another group consisted of Liberals and those who hoped for the ultimate conversion of the Liberal party to Socialism. Still others might be termed pure permeationists— their aim was to get things done, and as long as something was accomplished the political medium employed was of minor importance. The policy of permeation had satisfied all three groups before the appearance of the I. L. P., and it was only partially abandoned when the new party was formed. For it was obvious that although a party nucleus had been created, it had yet to win the general support which would enable it to make its presence felt. In the meantime much could be accomplished by other means; for the Fabians were convinced that the transition to Socialism would be a lengthy process, and the

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2 Pease, History of the Fabian Society, 102.
important thing was to get the movement in that direction started.

The influence of Fabian permeation remained important very largely because that policy received the continued support of the dominant personalities in the society—Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Shaw, too, remained a permeationist. This is not to say that either the Webbs or Shaw opposed the I. L. R. They simply considered that at the moment its effectiveness was limited, and that there was no sufficient reason why they should make its development their concern. Halevy states that the Webbs "were obviously fascinated by the success of the Bismarckian State-Socialism", and that they considered the I. L. P. a useless experiment. But they were not hostile, and perhaps foresaw better than most the difficulties which lay in the path of a new party. Moreover, the Webbs believed that the creation of new machinery was a slow and uncertain undertaking, and that that which already existed offered unsuspected possibilities, both as regarded use and development.

The influence of the Fabian Society is difficult to estimate, but friend and foe agree that it has been very considerable. Their activities have particularly impressed Halevy, who credits the Webbs with having exercised "a profound influence...over the formation of public opinion" in England during the 1895-1905 period. Certainly the importance of the development of the Fabian conception of Socialism can

3 Halevy, History of the English People in 1895-1905, 142.
5 Ibid, 142.
scarcely be overestimated, and their contribution to practice as well as theory was directly and indirectly an important one.

The policy of permeation assumed various forms, but all of them sought to capture the state in the interests of Socialism. The permeationists aimed to "make a Fabian State by insinuating Fabians into the key positions in the Government and local Government services and by insensibly "permeating" with Fabian ideals the persons chiefly responsible for the conduct of British affairs. Then the world would one day wake up to find that Great Britain had been secretly made Socialist."6 Sidney Webb, for instance, established as chairman of the Board of Technical Education of the London County Council used that position as a base for an elaborate attack upon the educational system. Having evolved his scheme and tested its soundness by defending it against unconvinced critics within the Fabian circle, Webb published it as a tract entitled, "The Education Muddle and the Way Out", in January 1901.7 Webb's influence was undoubtedly very considerable upon this occasion. Government officials requested advance proofs, the bill prepared the same year showed unmistakable leanings in the direction of his plan, and the Education Act of 1902 adopted practically all its salient points. This act did not apply to London, and the subsequent legislation revising the city's educational system was also greatly influenced by Webb's ideas.8

The Fabians preferred to accomplish their ends by encouragement and suggestion, but they occasionally resorted to a direct attack. In March 1893 Campbell-Bannerman had pledged the government to prove itself a model employer. The Fabians, intimately acquainted with the internal economy of government departments, were aware that the promise had not been fulfilled. Shaw and Webb consequently published an article entitled "To your tents, oh Israel" in the November issue of the "Fortnightly". It consisted of a systematic exposure of conditions in the various departments and revealed how completely the Liberals had ignored their pledge. Shaw was probably responsible for the interesting part of the article which advocated independent political action, urged the raising of a fund of £50,000, and the running of fifty candidates in the next election.

These two examples of Fabian tactics have been chosen because they illustrate a typical indifference to ways and means. The Fabians were long ranked as at least near-Liberals, and their vigorous attack on the Gladstone government caused much surprise. Inevitably it caused some trouble within the Society and several members resigned as a consequence, including H. W. Massingham. Similarly, Webb's intimate connection with the Conservative government's Education Act caused somewhat of a sensation. Halevy correctly describes the incident as "a victory for the disinterested Machiavellianism which was the

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9 Fortnightly Review, 60 (1893), 569. The article is signed, "The Fabian Society", but Pease states that it was written by Webb and Shaw (cf. History of the Fabian Society, 115). Halevy (History, 1895-1905, 229) credits it to Shaw only. It was revised and republished as Tract No. 49 in 1894.
essence of the Fabian method", 10 but should have pointed out that it was perhaps the supreme example of Webb's personal willingness to walk with anyone travelling in his direction. It was more typically Webb than Fabian; though many joined with him in rejoicing that "At their instigation Tory politicians had introduced into the law of Great Britain without intending, or even being aware of it, an important measure of educational Socialism."

The Fabian interest in education of other varieties continued to be as strong as ever. In particular it aimed to make clear to the public the significance and character of the various measures passed. Tract no. 53, for example, dealt with the Parish Councils Act and explained its nature and practical possibilities. Others dealt with the London County Council and the Parish and District Councils in a similar fashion. In 1897 the Society published tract no. 82, on the Workmen's Compensation Act, with the object of making its various provisions clear to the ordinary workmen, and in 1903 Sidney Webb prepared a similar tract explaining how to make the best of the Education Act. Such services as these may appear to have little to do with the Labour party, but they undoubtedly cleared many obstacles from its pathway by impressing the working classes with the possibilities of state action, and by teaching it to regard the Socialist not as a firebrand, but but as a progressive, sympathetic and constitutional reformer. 11

11 Ibid.
12 Tract No. 109 is interesting. It is entitled "Cottage Plans and Common Sense", and is a practical guide for house-planning, complete with detailed plans and views of model cottages. It was published in March 1902.
Fabian self-education continued in the 'nineties and in one direction especially made great strides. Remarkable as the "Fabian Essays" were, Webb himself points out that they "attached quite insufficient importance to trade unionism, which the book never mentions as a political force, or as constituting any essential part of the social structure. It is clear that we had little notion, in 1889, of the enduring value and indispensable social function of vocational organization of any sort..." Sidney and Beatrice Webb personally were responsible for the studies which corrected the Fabian perspective in this respect. In 1894 they published their monumental "History of Trade Unionism", and in 1897 supplemented it with "Industrial Democracy", an elaborate analysis of the structure and functions of the unions. These books make it clear that although the Webbs personally took no part in the Independent Labour party they appreciated the importance of the task it had undertaken. In the first edition of the "History", having described the advent of the New Unionism, they remarked upon "the rapid conversion of the superior workmen to the general principles of Collectivism," and continued as follows: "This revolution of opinion in the rank and file has been followed by a marked change of front on the part of the salaried officials, and by a growing distrust of the aristocratic and middle-class representatives of both the great political parties. To the working-man politician of 1894 it seems inconceivable that either

landlords or capitalists will actively help him to nationalise land and mining royalties, to absorb unearned incomes by taxation, or to control private enterprise in the interests of the wage-earner. Thus we find throughout the whole Trade Union world an almost unanimous desire to make the working-class organisations in some way effective for political purposes. ¹⁴ Continuing, the Webbs describe sympathetically but frankly the sectionalism which made united trade union action so difficult. But they express the opinion that the problem as to "How far it is possible....to render the Trade Union world, with its millions of electors, and its leadership of Labour, an effective political force in the State, is, on the whole, the most momentous question of contemporary politics."¹⁵

The I. L. P. had been created with the object of capturing the trade union movement in the interests of independent political action, and immediately attacked the problem with considerable energy. It was greatly assisted by Keir Hardie's activities in the House of Commons. In his first speech, delivered February 7, 1893, Hardie moved an amendment to the speech from the Throne asking for action on the unemployment problem. The motion was defeated by 276 to 109, but Stewart states that "The Liberals never forgave him for having compelled them to make exposure of their own inherent reactionism."¹⁶ There were strict limits to what one man could accomplish, but during his three years in the House Hardie drew attention to working-class problems on every

¹⁴ Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 678. From a passage reprinted from the first (1894) edition.
¹⁶ Stewart, J. Keir Hardie, 80.
possible occasion, and although his demands received scant attention his activities had an important propagandist value.

The I. L. P. tested its strength in three by-elections in 1994. The first took place at Mid-Lanark in April, and in a three-cornered contest the I. L. P. candidate secured 1221 votes. The second followed in July at Attercliffe, where Frank Smith was also opposed both by a Liberal and a Conservative. He secured 1249 votes, as compared with a total opposition vote of 7984. The result was not promising, but it showed that the new party had made some impression on the electorate. Almost as important was a letter received immediately after the election by Hardie from Ramsay MacDonald, in which the latter applied for membership in the I. L. P.

"I have stuck to the Liberals up to now," MacDonald wrote, "hoping that they might do something to justify the trust that we put in them. Attercliffe"—where the Liberals had refused to endorse a trade unionist candidate—"came as a rude awakening, and I felt during the contest that it was quite impossible for me to maintain my position as a Liberal any longer. .... I must accept the facts of the situation and candidly admit what the prophecies of the I. L. P. relating to Liberalism have been amply justified." MacDonald soon became prominent in the party and was placed on the National Council in 1896.

The third by-election in 1894 was fought at Leicester,

17 Stewart, J. Keir Hardie, 92. Clayton also quotes this letter (cf. Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain, 80). Ramsay MacDonald allowed his membership in the I. L. P. to lapse in January 1930.
and was particularly interesting because of the personalities involved. It was a two-member constituency, and in addition to a Liberal and a Conservative, Joseph Burgess, the I. L. P. candidate, who had for some years been advocating independent labour representation in "The Workman's Times", was opposed by Henry Broadhurst, running as a Liberal-Labour. Burgess made an excellent showing, and secured 4402 votes. Keir Hardie himself pointed out that the results at all three elections showed that the I. L. P. had gained a considerable following amongst the general public, and that its strength was far greater than its membership indicated. The Mid-Lanark branch had less than a hundred members when the by-election took place there, that at Attercliffe had been only recently founded, and at Leicester there was no branch at all until after the election. A total I. L. P. vote of 6872 was, therefore, very promising. The success of the party in the municipal elections of November 1894, which will be noted presently, further encouraged the I. L. P. Hardie examined the results of the last general election and found that 53 Liberals held their seats by a majority of less than 250, and came to the conclusion that the I. L. P. held at least the balance of power in many of these. Moreover, recruits continued to be numerous, and among those who joined late in the year was Philip Snowden.

But the I. L. P. was overly optimistic regarding its prospects in the general election of 1895. As a consequence

18 Cole places the membership in 1895 at 6000. (Cf. Short History..., II, 170). Its active supporters were much more numerous however. Pete Curran, chairman of the party, claimed 35,000 members in the same year. (Cf. Clayton, Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain, 79).

19 J. Keir Hardie, "The Independent Labour Party", Nineteenth
it made the serious mistake of running no less than 28 candidates, instead of concentrating its limited resources and energies on a smaller number of promising seats. Disaster was practically certain under the circumstances and not one of the twenty-eight was elected—a result which contrasted badly with the success of twelve Liberal-Labour candidates. The old labour representation seemed to have demonstrated its superiority over the new. Even Keir Hardie had been defeated at West Ham, though this was largely because his manifold activities had prevented him from keeping in close touch with his constituency.

The defeat, however, was by no means as complete as the I. L. P.'s enemies—and some of its friends—thought. One observer at least realized the true state of affairs. J. L. Garvin published a thoughtful article in the "Fortnightly" with the surprising title of "A Party with a Future". "We have been assured since the General Election," he said, "that the Independent Labour Party is extinct and will never be revived. It is the general opinion."20 But, Garvin points out, the showing made by the I. L. P. candidates was in many cases better than that made by successful unionist candidates in 1885. Further, in twenty constituencies the I. L. P. had polled an average of 2200 votes. "In the simple arithmetic and

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the simple politics of the matter," he comments, "that seems the central fact, which points not to the elimination of the Independent Labour Party from practical politics, but its assured permanence as an increasingly powerful and disturbing factor." Garvin then proceeds to give some impressions of a party conference he had attended, the interesting character of which is illustrated by his assurance that it had not been characterized by "bad grammar and vile tobacco," which the public naturally assumed were features of a labour meeting. "Apart from the touches of colour lent by red ties and red rosettes, and by two or three smart gowns," he assures his readers, "the whole assembly was very spruce and neat." Finally, Garvin points out that "Politics are like that other need of democracy, soap—much depends upon the advertising." Labour had so far been able to afford very little, and was severely handicapped accordingly, but he insisted that the I. L. P. had a future, and that it was a growing power which would have to be reckoned with.

The I. L. P. candidates had secured in all a total of 44,320 votes, or an average of approximately 1600 per seat contested. It was an encouraging showing, but nevertheless made it clear that though the field was sown, much remained to be done before a full harvest could be reaped. The consequence was that a tendency which was already strong became supreme,

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22 Ibid, 326.
23 Ibid, 335.
and the I. L. P., while remaining in theory a party, became in practice a propagandist socialist society seeking to propagate amongst trade unionists a belief in Socialism, or in independent representation, or in both. It did not abandon parliamentary politics, but it ran candidates as a form of propaganda, and not because it had much reason to anticipate their election. But the I. L. P. devoted itself to municipal politics with the greatest energy, and there proved not only its sincerity and practical ability, but also slowly developed a voting power which it was later to turn to account in the parliamentary field.

In this respect, as in its conception of Socialism, it was once more following in Fabian footsteps. As early as 1888 two Fabians, Mrs. Besant and the Reverend Stewart Headlam, had been elected to the London School Board. In 1892 no less than six members of the society were elected to the London County Council, including Sidney Webb, who headed the poll. The Fabian interest was primarily in education, but the society's influence upon municipal politics and policy in general was widespread. The I. L. P. carried on what had commenced as a permeative policy with great success. As early as the 1894 election its candidates had secured on an average about 30 per cent of the votes cast in the larger centres. Before long the party had 800 members on various municipal bodies. Fabian and I. L. P. representatives alike supported socialist regulation and
legislation in the local field, and advanced the cause of public ownership. The 'nineties were a period of tremendous development of public utilities and services, as even such a brief survey as the admirable chapter in Slater's "Making of Modern England" demonstrates. But doubts have recently been cast upon the importance of the Socialists' role in this development. "Politics played very little part in municipal elections," Halevy contends, "and up to 1895 only an occasional Socialist had been elected here and there to certain town councils. The mayors and the councillors of the large cities were leading citizens, chosen for the most part without any consideration of party, and it was not Socialism, but pride in their municipality which urged them to municipalise every year a greater portion of the productive capital within their jurisdiction, to the delight of the Webbs who saw in this policy a perfect expression of the Fabian method." But the fact remains that whether or not the Fabian and I. L. P. candidates were elected on party lines or not, they held office and accomplished what is of first importance for the present purpose—the creation of that popular support which was presently to send them to parliament.

No feature of working-class political history is more striking than the extraordinary attraction of the workers to the Liberal party. Their loyalty to Liberalism was the greatest obstacle in the path of the Independent Labour party, and

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26 Halevy, History of the English People in 1895-1905, 239-240.
Liberalism's greatest asset was undoubtedly the personality of Gladstone. Disraeli and the Conservatives had given the workers the Labour Laws they sought, but they remained faithful to the Liberals and enchanted with their leader. The I. L. P. argument was simple and logical enough. "Neither of the political parties is of any use to the workers," wrote Blatchford in "Merrie England," "because both the political parties are paid, officered and led by capitalists whose interests are opposed to the interests of the workers."  

The capitalists controlled both the making and administering of the laws because the vast majority of the members of Parliament were their representatives, while "The twenty-seven millions of workers are not represented by more than a dozen members." The formation of a workers' party was the only solution, for, Blatchford continued, "to be a trade unionist and fight for your class during a strike, and to be a Tory or a Liberal and fight against your class at an election is folly. During a strike there are no Tories or Liberals amongst the strikers," he concluded; "they are all workers. At election times there are no workers, only Liberals and Tories." But the politics of the working class was not a simple matter of reason, but a complicated intermingling of tradition, loyalties, and sentiments. Until Gladstone retired in 1894 the I. L. P. could make little progress; and it was only as his influence declined and the feeling spread abroad that the great days were over, that the cause of independent

28 Ibid, 233.
29 Ibid, 236.
representation secured a hearing from the masses.

During its first years the I. L. P. was, therefore, to a great extent a movement among the leaders of trade unionism, not one amongst the rank and file. Its membership consisted at first very largely of the younger, better educated trade union officials, and most of the leaders of the New Unionism. As Hutchison observes, "The advent of the I. L. P. signified the conversion of a hitherto untouched section of the community to Socialism..." It "was composed of the young men who a generation or two earlier would have been found in the Radical wing of the Liberal Party." The opposition consisted of the old school trade unionists and those opposed to political action by the unions. They championed self-reliance, looked upon the formation of a separate working-class party as the declaration of a class war which they believed would be fatal to all, and would, if they could, have confined unionism to the skilled trades. Parliamentary action, independent representation, Socialism and the New Unionism thus together struck at the very foundations of their world.

This opposition naturally centred in the Trades Union Congress. Following their initial victory in 1890, the Socialists and new unionists, as mentioned previously, won a second point in 1892, when the T. U. C. favored the establishment of a fund to assist working-class candidates. In 1893, further progress was made, for the Congress not only adopted a scheme

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30 Hutchison, Labour in Politics, 62.
for raising the fund, but, by a narrow majority, passed a motion in favor of independent labour candidates, and declared it would only financially assist those who supported the nationalization of the means of production, distribution and exchange. In 1894 the T.U.C. passed a motion favoring the nationalization of land, mines, and the means of production and exchange.

In July of 1895 the I. L. P. suffered defeat in the election, and in September it was severely handled at the Trades Union Congress. The Liberals themselves had fared badly in July and the number of Liberal-Labour working-class members also fell from sixteen to twelve. The I. L. P. was severely blamed for this reduction as well as its own failure, and the Congress amended its constitution in three respects in an effort to reduce the influence of the Socialists. First, trades councils, the representatives of which tended to support the Socialists, were excluded from the Congress. Secondly, in future each delegate, in place of a single vote, would possess a voting power in proportion to the membership of the organization which he represented—a change which greatly strengthened the influence of the larger and more conservative unions, which, because of the expense involved, could not send to the Congress the large representation to which, under the old scheme, they were entitled. Lastly, all delegates were in future required to be actual trade union members. This third change excluded Hardie, Broadhurst and Burns from the Congress, but the latter two accepted the ruling cheerfully because Hardie was deprived
of his seat. The new voting system made itself felt immediately. The socialist motion in favor of nationalization had passed by a vote of 219 to 61 in 1894. In 1895 it was rejected under the new system by 607,000 to 186,000—a turnover which was too complete to be merely the result of the I. L. P.'s temporary disgrace.

The labour movement made little progress during the later 'nineties, and it is not surprising that there were "some signs of lassitude" at the I. L. P. conference in 1896. The next two years were critical ones in the party's history, and much of the credit for its continued existence must go to Keir Hardie. In 1898, Stewart tells us, the I. L. P. was "passing through the most depressing period of its history. It had existed for five years. It had fought numerous by-elections, but had not yet a single representative in Parliament. It had ceased to grow.... The Party was at this time saved from utter stagnation by the annually recurring municipal elections, which served to maintain the fighting spirit locally, and by the indomitable persistence of its propagandists, of whom its founder and chairman was the chief."33

Yet in spite of all its difficulties the I. L. P. accomplished something during those dark years. The old school union leaders became, if anything, increasingly hostile, and the Trades Union Congress remained unfriendly. But the party was making an impression. In November 1897, its candidates in the municipal elections were...
elections polled 38 per cent of the votes cast in the constituencies which they contested. In spite of determined opposition the I. L. P. made a showing in parliamentary by-elections. Pete Curran, for example, ran at Barnsley in 1897. Beer describes the campaign thus: "Ben Pickard, the general secretary and chief leader of the miners, worked day and night for the Liberal; the whole press was on the side of the latter, whilst Curran was stoned by the miners and mobbed by their women and children, whistling and yelling and shouting him down. Nevertheless he polled 1091 votes." Tom Mann had polled 2479 votes at Aberdeen some time previous to this, and in a second 1897 by-election at Halifax his supporters numbered 2000. The I. L. P. was thus building a foundation, but no structure could be reared upon it for the moment.

The I. L. P. was both encouraged and assisted during these dark years by Robert Blatchford. Blatchford had been converted to Socialism in 1890, and the following year commenced the publication of "The Clarion", a weekly paper in which he supported the cause both of Socialism and independent labour representation. Its circulation grew rapidly, and its influence was very great. Hardly less important were Blatchford's books. "Merrie England" was published in 1893 and it is said that a million copies have been sold. It consists of a simple statement of the nature of, and case for Socialism, and like "The Clarion" links with this the necessity for a new working-class party.

35 Ibid.
Blatchford's other important publication was "Britain for the British", which appeared in 1902. "At present Britain does not belong to the British", it commences; "it belongs to a few of the British who employ the bulk of the population as servants or as workers." It frankly confesses that its purpose is "to convert the reader to Socialism", and was in reality a revised edition of "Merrie England". Blatchford did not entirely agree with the I. L. P., but the support he gave to its objectives was of the greatest value.

There is much truth in Beer's statement that the I. L. P. had thus far only proved itself to be "an improved edition of the S. D. F." It was, as previously noted, primarily a movement among the leaders, not among the masses. But the last years of the century saw the situation change rapidly. Gladstone, whose influence remained considerable, died in 1898. More important, the trade union movement became increasingly aware that its status and strength was being tested and found lacking. In 1897 the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the chief of the old school unions, became involved in a disastrous strike. In spite of its enormous reserve funds and the receipt of assistance amounting to no less than £116,000 the strikers were defeated after thirty weeks and forced to surrender late in January 1898. Before the conclusion of this struggle 90,000 South Wales miners struck on the sliding-scale issue, and met defeat when compelled to

37 Ibid, 2.
38 Beer, History of British Socialism, II, 315.
make terms in August. Lesser capitalist victories accompanied these large-scale encounters, and some of them indicated that the famous Labour Laws of 1875 were failing to protect the unions as hitherto. There is much to be said for Halevy's interesting suggestion that the trade union defeats were due to some extent at least to the capture of the popular sympathy and imagination by Imperialistic interests. But this was no consolation to the workers, and trade unionism began to consider both industrial and political means of strengthening its position.

The industrial defence was the first to be organized. In 1898 the Trades Union Congress took steps which led to the organization of a General Federation of Trade Unions. But the previous year the Congress had reversed its decision of 1895 and had again endorsed nationalization. Socialism and political action are ever near to one another, and the latter finally received attention at the 1899 Congress, which was held at Plymouth, as a result of a stratagem on the part of the I.L.P. In the office of its journal, Hardie's "Labour Leader", Ramsay MacDonald drafted a resolution, which was presented to the Congress through the medium of James Holmes, a delegate of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. It read as follows:

"This Congress, having regard to its decisions in former years, and with a view to securing a better representation of the interests of Labour in the House of Commons, hereby instructs the Parliamentary Committee to invite the cooperation of all the co-operative, socialist, trade unions, and other working organizations to jointly co-operate on lines mutually agreed upon, in convening a special

congress of representatives from such of the above-mentioned organizations as may be willing to take part, to devise ways and means for securing the return of an increased number of labour members to the next Parliament." 41

The resolution was seconded by James Sexton, a delegate of the Liverpool dockers, and after a heated discussion in the course of which the old school leaders vigorously attacked the plan, it was passed by a vote of 546,000 to 434,000.

The resolution having been passed, the I. L. P. next endeavored to rescue it from the unsympathetic clutches of the Parliamentary Committee, and assume charge of it itself. This proved to be less difficult than anticipated because the Committee had no faith in the scheme suggested. A committee of ten was appointed to consider what action should be taken. Four of the members represented the Congress—Sam Woods, a Liberal, W. C. Steadman, a Radical and Fabian, Richard Bell, who was sympathetic to Socialism, and Will Thorne, a Social Democrat. Of the remaining members, Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald represented the I. L. P., Harry Quelch and H. R. Taylor the S. D. F., and Edward Pease and Bernard Shaw the Fabian Society. The important point was that the Socialists were in the majority, and, as Beer remarks, "they were far superior to the trade unionist members in intelligence, energy, and knowledge of their aims." 42

The Socialists made good use of their advantage, and the committee not only arranged for a general conference to consider


the labour representation question, but also prepared a series of rules and resolutions for its guidance. The most important of these was that which defined the character of the representation desired. The Committee declared itself "in favor of establishing a distinct Labour group in Parliament, who should have their own Whips and agree upon their policy, which must embrace a readiness to co-operate with any party which, for the time being, may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of labour, and be equally ready to associate themselves with any party in opposing measures having an opposite tendency." If the majority of the committee had its way, the I. L. P.'s ambition to create a political body based primarily upon the trade unions and supporting independent labour representation was about to be fulfilled.

Seventy organizations sent 129 delegates to the historic conference, which met in Memorial Hall, London, on February 27, 1900. W. C. Steadman, the Radical and Fabian, presided. It soon became evident that common ground among the delegations was limited to the opinion that better labour representation was desirable. Three distinct viewpoints presently developed, both with regard to the character of the proposed labour members, and to the characteristics of the political organization the conference proposed to create. Some wished to require candidates to belong personally to the working

43 Beer, History of British Socialism, II, 318. All the resolutions and rules prepared are given.
44 The 129 delegates represented 545,316 trade unionists, and 22,861 members of socialist societies.
class. Others were willing to endorse anyone sympathetic to labour's demands and aims, if he was supported by a body represented at the conference. A group of extremists declared it could consider as acceptable only avowed Socialists who recognized the class war. With regard to the organization itself, some wished it to go no further than Radicalism, others hoped it would be independently labour, and the extremists wished to see its direction assumed by the Social Democratic Federation.

Lengthy discussions naturally resulted from this wide difference of opinion, but two resolutions finally emerged, the passing of which decided both the issues at stake. The first, moved by G. N. Barnes and seconded by John Burns, declared

"That this Conference is in favour of working-class opinion being represented in the House of Commons by men sympathetic with the aims and demands of the Labour Movements, and whose candidatures are promoted by one or other of the organized movements." 46

The conference approved of this plan by a vote of 102 to 3, and passed its more important companion unanimously. Keir Hardie moved this second resolution, and G. R. Wardle of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants seconded it. It declared

"That this Conference is in favour of establishing a distinct Labour Group in Parliament, who shall have their own Whips, and agree upon their policy which must embrace a readiness to co-operate with any party which for the

45 Burns was at this time a Liberal, and Beer states that "not much attention was paid to him." Cf. History of British Socialism, II, 319. Barnes was a Labour member of of Coalition ministry during the war, and remained a coalitionist when Labour withdrew in 1918.

These resolutions constituted a complete victory for the I.L.P., and the second, like the original resolution passed by the T. U. C., had been drawn up by Ramsay MacDonald, who is credited with having "exercised a profound though not generally realized influence upon the whole proceedings."48

This conference did not create the Labour party, as is frequently supposed. It merely created a Labour Representation Committee to fulfil the purpose for which it had been called, which Keir Hardie declared "was to secure a united Labour vote in support of Labour candidates and co-operation amongst them on Labour questions when returned."49 Even the Committee's permanency was uncertain, and its development into a party was undoubtedly due to the zeal of the Socialists. The Committee's candidates were to form "a distinct Labour Group"; but, as Pease, a member of the first executive points out, "the members might sit as Liberals or Conservatives or Socialists; they were only pledged to act together on Labour questions."50

The Labour Representation Committee (L. R. C.) was thus not the long-sought independent working-class party, though it was to develop rapidly in that direction, in no small measure because the conference selected Ramsay MacDonald to be the L. R. C. secretary. The Committee had an executive of twelve.

47 The Book of the Labour Party, I, 123.
48 Ibid, 120.
50 Kirkup and Pease, History of Socialism, 384-385.
Seven of these represented the trade unions, and one of them, Frederick Rogers, was its first chairman. The remaining five represented the three socialist societies. James Macdonald and Harry Quelch sat for the S. D. F., Keir Hardie and James Parker for the I. L. P., and Pease for the Fabian Society. The Socialists were thus once again present in force, and in addition had captured what was to prove the key position—the secretaryship.

In spite of its limitations, the L. R. C. had in its constitution—for which MacDonald was largely responsible—devised a means of overcoming two of the greatest difficulties in the way of a working-class party. First, it had developed the federation idea—the plan which enabled a single political body to rest upon a heterogeneous mass of other organizations. Unions and societies which became affiliated with the Labour Representation Committee were entitled to one delegate for each 2000 of their membership, at the Committee's conferences. More important, the comparatively large membership of the affiliated organizations pointed the way to the solution of the greatest problem of all, that of finance. Five years before Keir Hardie had pointed out that if the I. L. P. could raise its membership to 50,000, the modest individual contribution of three pence weekly would give the party an annual income of £32,500. Continuing, he stated that it was "only a question of time until Trade Unionists will be expected to contribute to their political funds as much as a matter of course as it is to-day to pay into their Trade Union fund,"
out-of-work fund, sick fund or accident fund." But only the conversion of the unions to united political action could secure the double advantage of a large income and a small individual contribution. The L. R. C. was visible evidence that a great advance had been made in that direction. But much remained to be done before the Labour party could be considered an accomplished fact. The unions were still far from enthusiastic. They tended to look upon the Committee as a temporary expedient. Most important of all, the issue of independence was still at stake. The champions of a working-class party were encouraged by the Committee's advent; but they were well aware that its importance depended not upon what it was, but upon what it might prove itself capable of becoming.

52 Stewart, J. Keir Hardie, 152-154 gives many interesting details of a Scottish Conference held in Edinburgh on January 6, 1900, as a preliminary to the national conference which met in London in February. Robert Smillie presided over an assembly of 226 delegates representing trade unions, trades councils, co-operative organizations and branches of the I.L.P. and S.D.F. A long resolution was passed which concluded with the declaration that "this Conference is of the opinion that the only means by which such reforms can be obtained is by having direct independent working-class representation in the House of Commons and on local administrative bodies, and hereby pledges itself to secure that end as a logical sequence to the possession of political power by the working classes." (J. Keir Hardie, 154).
Chapter VI

THE ADVENT OF THE LABOUR PARTY

The Labour Representation Committee was created in a world that was absorbed in the progress of the South African War. The declaration had come soon after the Trades Union Congress had passed the resolution which led to the Committee's organization, and Ladysmith was relieved on February 28, 1900, the day subsequent to that upon which the conference had assembled in London.

The war not only stirred the nation deeply, but early split it into two camps led by the passionate champions of opposing opinions. In Ramsay Muir's words, "to a substantial minority in Britain, the war appeared to be a cynical attack by a vast and powerful empire upon two little farmer-republics, an attack which was engineered by mining magnates and financiers for the purpose of getting possession of valuable gold-fields. To the majority of the British people it appeared as a war for equality of rights, and against the iniquity of racial ascendancy; a war of defence, moreover, against a small but restless and aggressive State which had been a source of disturbance for many years."¹ The Socialists, who constituted the driving force in the L. R. C., could not but be involved in this eruption of feeling. The Fabian Society was, perhaps,

placed under the greatest strain, for the membership was divided in its opinion. The executive took advantage of the rule permitting a postal referendum and submitted to the entire membership the question, "Are you in favour of an official pronouncement being made now by the Fabian Society on Imperialism in relation to the War?" Of the 800 members less than 500 responded, but the pronouncement was defeated by a vote of 259 to 217. A few members resigned as a consequence, including Ramsay MacDonald, Mrs. MacDonald, G. N. Barnes, Pete Curran, Walter Crane and Mrs. Pankhurst.  

The I. L. P. maintained throughout an attitude of hostility to the war. Even before its outbreak the National Council had in September 1899 passed a resolution deploring the government's policy, and pointing out that it could only lead to "a war of conquest to secure complete control in the interests of unscrupulous exploiters." Keir Hardie had made his attitude to war clear in 1898 when he declared that "the old reasons for war have passed away, and, the reasons gone, war should go also. To-day they fight to extend markets, and no Empire can stand based solely on the sordid considerations of trade and commerce." It was the opinion which he held throughout the South African struggle, and one with which the vast majority of the members of the I. L. P. agreed. Its anti-war attitude cost the party the support of Robert Blatchford, however, who was an ex-soldier and championed the government's policy throughout  

2 Cf. Pease, History of the Fabian Society, 128-133.  
3 Stewart, J. Keir Hardie, 143.  
4 Ibid, 133.  
5 H. H. Champion and Blatchford are only two examples of the support given to Socialism by ex-soldiers and, surprisingly, by ex-officers. Contemporary figures include Lord Thomson and Colonel Wedgwood.
It was in this heated atmosphere that the Labour Representation Committee fought its first election—the so-called "Khaki" election of October 1900. The Socialists' opposition to the war—which reconciled the I. L. P. and S.D.F. for a time—was shared to some extent by the trade unionists. But the passions abroad at the moment made the victory of the Salisbury government certain, and with labour issues in the background the prospects of the L. R. C. were not promising. Nevertheless it contested fifteen seats, most of the candidates being nominees of the socialist societies. Funds were lacking, as the political levy was not yet established, but in spite of many obstacles two seats were won. Richard Bell was elected at Derby, and Keir Hardie was successful at Merthyr, where the Welsh miners thus demonstrated their gratitude for his efforts on their behalf during the disastrous coal strike of 1898.

It must be clearly understood that Bell and Hardie did not compose a party. "After the first election", MacDonald says, "the Labour members did not even meet to consult each other on Parliamentary business. Each was a Party in himself." Bell had been a Liberal, and was claimed by them, even though elected under the auspices of the L. R. C. Equally serious was his deep distrust of the I. L. P., which complicated his relations with Hardie. Ten Liberal-Labour members had been

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6 Hardie ran first at Preston, a double constituency, where he was defeated by two Conservatives. At Merthyr, also a double riding, he was elected with D. A. Thomas (later Lord Rhondda), who was an anti-war Liberal. The second Liberal was defeated.

7 MacDonald, A Policy for the Labour Party, 24-25.

8 The Book of the Labour Party, I, 127.
elected, and Hardie hoped for the formation of a working-class group, but the scheme did not materialize. So far as labour representation was concerned "It seemed", as Stewart remarks, "as if the general election had been held for the sole and express purpose of getting Hardie back into Parliament."\(^9\)

The new session saw Hardie once again drawing attention to labour problems and demands on every possible occasion. At times he advanced into Socialism, and two of these sallies deserve special notice. The first took the form of an amendment to the speech from the Throne which thanked the King for his speech, but regretted that the monarchy had not been abolished. The motion was solemnly ruled out of order by the Speaker. The second occasion was less amusing but more important. On April 23, 1901, Hardie moved a resolution which his biographer claims to have been "the first complete Socialist declaration ever made in the British House of Commons.\(^10\) It proposed that Parliament should remedy the present sad state of affairs "by inaugurating a Socialist Commonwealth founded upon the common ownership of land and capital, production for use and not for profit, and equality of opportunity for every citizen."\(^11\)

Meanwhile events were taking place which were to influence profoundly the history of the Labour Representation Committee. Agreement is general that the selection of Ramsay MacDonald as secretary was an event of the utmost importance. He possessed

\(^9\) Stewart, J. Keir Hardie, 174.
\(^10\) Ibid, 180.
"tact, energy, courage and patience",12 and the Committee's development was largely due to his efforts. But the response of the unions was at first disappointing. The affiliated membership in 1900 was only 375,931, which included nearly 23,000 members of the I.L.F., the S.D.F. and the Fabian Society. No co-operative societies joined.13 The general fund amounted to only £243; and, although the fifteen L.R.C. candidates in the general election polled a total of 62,698 votes, or over 35 per cent of those cast in the constituencies contested, the trade unions remained relatively apathetic. But in July 1901 the House of Lords delivered the famous Taff Vale decision, the significance and the effect of which cannot be appreciated without a word of explanation.

It has been noted that the trade disputes which occurred in the later 'nineties not only revealed the weakness of the unions, but also endangered their legal status. Various actions brought against them made it increasingly clear that the protection given by the Acts of 1875 was proving insufficient to ward off the attacks of skilful corporation lawyers. Of this the trade unionists themselves only became slowly aware, but students of the labour movement perceived the true state of affairs. As early as 1897 the Webbs had lamented that not even the union officials realized the seriousness of the situation.14 Lawyers had succeeded in proving that practically every trade union method of action was a "conspiracy to injure", and

12 Hutchison, Labour in Politics, 76.
13 The first co-operative society to join the L.R.C. became affiliated with it in 1903.
therefore a basis for an action for damages on the part of the employer. But it required some direct and staggering blow to shock the trade unionists into a consciousness of their danger. It came in the form of a suit for damages against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants instituted by the Taff Vale Railway Company. A strike had occurred on the line in 1900. It had lasted only ten days, and the settlement could be called neither a victory nor a defeat; but the Railway Company determined to sue the Amalgamated Society for damages. As the Webbs point out, previous actions had "left unchallenged the position of the Trade Union itself as immune from legal proceedings against its corporate funds;"15 but the House of Lords, to which the Taff Vale case was carried, gave its decision in favor of the Railway. The Amalgamated Society had not authorized the strike, but it was nevertheless ordered to pay £23,000 damages, and costs which raised the total to £42,000.16

The judgment was undoubtedly contrary to the intention, but not to the letter, of the Acts of 1875, but that offered small comfort to the unions. The important point is that their financial liability for the acts of their members and officials had been declared unlimited. It is true that employers took advantage of the decision only in Wales,17 but the position of the unions was intolerably insecure, and the labour movement united in its demand for new legislation definitely granting the unions the status which had been considered for years to be already theirs by implication under the older Acts.

15 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 600.
16 Cf. Ibid, 601.
17 Beer, History of British Socialism, II, 322.
With its industrial activities thus jeopardized, the movement naturally turned to political action. Ramsay MacDonald declares that "it is a profound mistake to assume, as is too commonly done, that the Taff Vale decision "saved the Committee from failure," but he admits that it did give the L. R. C. "considerable impetus." Undoubtedly it hastened the coming of the Labour party. It gave the theory of independent labour representation a practical, concrete issue upon which to fight its battle, and the nature of that issue attracted the interest and sympathy of practically all trade unionists. The affiliated membership of the Committee jumped from 469,000 in 1901 to 861,000 in 1902, and neared the million mark in 1903.

The influence of the I. L. P. remained strong. In reality it constituted what several authorities term the driving force of the Committee. Its predominance was displeasing to the Marxist Social Democratic Federation, and the latter resigned from the L. R. C. in 1901, though some of its members continued their activities as members of affiliated trade unions. The position of the Fabian Society was peculiar, and became increasingly delicate as the I. L. P. guided the Committee's uncertain footsteps in the direction of a completely independent party. The Fabians as a body still declined to place their faith exclusively in any single party, and its membership included Liberal members of Parliament. In 1896, in the "Report on Fabian Policy", the Society had declared that it did not propose that the practical steps towards Social Democracy should

19 Ibid.
be carried out by itself or by any other specially organised society or party;"20 but it expressed its faith in the L. R. C. by its affiliation, and many of the members and ex-members were active both in the I. L. P. and the Committee.

If the S. D. F. found the Labour Representation Committee too mild in its attitude, there were those among the trade unionists who considered it dangerously extreme, and had no sympathy with its independent tendencies. Richard Bell, whose Liberal sympathies have been noted, was the Committee's chairman in 1902 and 1903, and the I. L. P. was kept busy counteracting his influence. "There was a daily risk," MacDonald says,"that the whole movement would be diverted on to the position of the old Liberal-Labour electoral associations and that men run by us would be used by acute party managers for our undoing."21 During his period as Chairman Bell "supported both a Unionist and a Liberal candidate on the ground that he knew them and that they were good fellows."22

The I. L. P. was determined that the Committee should not fall into the Liberal clutches, and commenced in earnest a campaign to transform it into a permanent and independent party. Bell himself brought the independence issue to a head. In a 1903 by-election at Norwich, G. H. Roberts contested the seat as an I. L. P. candidate, and Bell precipitated a crisis which was bound to come sooner or later by sending his best wishes to Roberts' Liberal opponent. Worse still, he followed them up with a telegram of congratulation when the Liberal won the seat.

21 MacDonald, A Policy for the Labour Party, 25.
Under the circumstances it was not to be wondered at that many felt, as Keir Hardie expressed it, "that a clearer declaration was needed of the aims and objects of the Party than that laid down in the somewhat loosely worded resolutions agreed to at the first Conference."23

The chief struggle occurred at the third annual conference of the L. R. C., which met at Newcastle in 1903. Pete Curran moved, and John Hodge seconded a lengthy resolution, the important point in which was its declaration that "this conference regards it as being absolutely necessary that the members of the Executive Committee and officials of affiliated organizations should strictly abstain from identifying themselves with, or promoting the interests of, any section of the Liberal or Conservative parties..."24 An animated discussion followed, led on behalf of the Liberal-Labour viewpoint by Richard Bell and John Ward, who were vigorously opposed by Curran, Hardie and Ben Tillett, as champions of independence. The resolution was passed by a vote of 659,000 to 154,000, and the constitution was thoroughly overhauled, the declared object of the L. R. C. being revised to read as follows:

"To secure, by united action, the election to Parliament of candidates promoted, in the first instance, by an affiliated society or societies in the constituency, who undertake to form or join a distinct group in Parliament, with its own Whips and its own policy on Labour questions, to abstain strictly from identifying themselves with or promoting the interests of any section of the Liberal or Conservative parties, and not to oppose any other candidate recognised by this Committee. All such candidates

shall pledge themselves to accept this constitution, to abide by the decisions of the group in carrying out the aims of this constitution or resign, and to appear before their constituencies under the title of Labour candidates only."\(^{25}\)

The Labour Representation Committee thus emerged from the 1903 conference something more than a committee, and its representatives in the House, which at the time numbered three, were instructed to form a group and meet together.\(^{26}\) When the revised constitution was passed Bell retired from the L. R. C. and joined the Liberals.

The year 1903 was marked by several other important developments. First, the Newcastle conference officially adopted the proposal of the political levy, and fixed the rate of contribution at the modest sum of a penny per member per year. The result was unsatisfactory because the levy was voluntary, and no definite provision was made for its collection. Further, the individual contribution was so low that the expense of collection would have swallowed up the levy. The difficulty was met at the ensuing conference, when the levy was made compulsory and the problem of collection was solved by instructing the affiliated organizations to collect it along with their own dues. The combined income of the General and Parliamentary funds rose to nearly £12,500 in 1905-06 as a consequence, and Keir Hardie's prophecy as to how the financial problem would be solved was fulfilled.

It was also in 1903 that the Trades Union Congress made a


\(^{26}\) MacDonald, A Policy for the Labour Party, 25.
last attempt to influence the character and policy of the Labour Representation Committee. The organic relation between the two was somewhat ambiguous. The L. R. C. had been created through the efforts of a committee set up by the Congress, and the connection between them had never been officially severed. The tendency of the L. R. C. to develop into an independent party led by Socialists—and especially by Hardie and MacDonald—did not meet with the approval of all the delegates at the 1903 Congress. An attack was as a consequence made upon the L. R. C. It took the form of an amendment to a resolution urging the unions to support the Committee, and sought to confine its membership to active trade unionists. In other words, it proposed to compel Hardie and MacDonald to withdraw from the L. R. C., just as Hardie had been forced out of the Trades Union Congress in 1895. The amendment was fortunately defeated, and the original resolution endorsed. At the succeeding Congress questions relating to the L. R. C. were ruled out of order, and the Committee was thus recognized as being an entirely independent organization.27

The year 1903 also saw the L. R. C. twice successful at the polls. While the war lasted its candidates were invariably defeated. Robert Smillie had failed to capture North-East Lanark, and in the spring of 1902 Philip Snowden was beaten by a Conservative at Wakefield. The conclusion of the war directed attention once more to domestic affairs, which were soon

complicated by rising unemployment and falling prices. Presently a vacancy occurred at Clitheroe, in the heart of the textile country, and Snowden was brought forward as an L. R. C. candidate. He soon withdrew in favor of David Shackleton, a leader among the textile workers who, "although almost unknown at the time in the larger Labour world,... was a force to be reckoned with in his own industry and in his own county." His prestige in the constituency was so great that neither of the national parties cared to test his strength, and he was consequently returned unopposed. Shackleton was not a Socialist, but he supported the L. R. C.'s independent policy, and Stewart therefore considers that his election "was the first electoral expression of a change of outlook on the part of trade unionists..."  

But it was in March 1903 that the L. R. C. actually fought its first successful fight since the general election. Will Crooks, who had been for years a popular and energetic figure in East London local politics, contested a seat at Woolwich under the auspices of the Woolwich Trades Council. The campaign was splendidly organized, and Crooks received the invaluable support of the London Radical press. He won the seat by a vote of 8,687 as compared with only 5,458 secured by his Unionist opponent. A month later John Hodge contested a seat at Preston. He was beaten by 8,639 to 6,490 votes by a Conservative, but his campaign had rallied the forces in the constituency and it returned a Labour member at the next election.

29 Stewart, J., Keir Hardie, 193.
A third by-election was fought at Barnard Castle in July. It is interesting not only because the fight was three-cornered, but also because the L. R. C. candidate was a new recruit who was to do much for the party—Arthur Henderson. He won the seat by the narrow majority of 47 votes, with the Liberal at the bottom of the poll. The tables were turned at Norwich later in the year, however, when, in the by-election made notable by Richard Bell's support of the successful Liberal, G. H. Roberts was badly defeated. But the year was nevertheless an encouraging one, for it saw the Committee's group in the House rise to four—the members being Keir Hardie, Shackleton, Crooks and Henderson—the figure at which it was to remain until the general election.

The membership of the L. R. C., which had risen to practically 970,000 in 1903 declined to 900,000 in 1904, but rose again to 921,000 in 1905, and a new record of 998,000 in 1906. By the latter year the Miners' Federation of Great Britain was the only large union which had not affiliated. The miners had taken an active interest in politics ever since the election of Macdonald and Burt in 1874, and in later years usually returned the majority of the Liberal-Labour group. They had anticipated the L. R. C. political levy plan, having commenced to collect a penny per member per month in 1901, to create a Parliamentary fund. The Federation joined the Labour Party in 1908, and for several years previous to that its

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30 The results of the two elections were as follows:

31 Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 685.
relations with the latter's predecessor were very friendly. The organizations went so far as to assist the candidates of the other. When Tom Richards was endorsed by the Federation and ran in West Monmouth, for example, he was assisted by L. R. C. speakers and the distribution of L. R. C. literature.

It is impossible to say what percentage of the million affiliated members of the Committee were supporters of its policy and programme. The organizations which joined it usually did so when the vote of its membership showed a majority was in favor of the step. As the entire membership was included in the L. R. C. total upon affiliation, the million included numerous unfriendly and in some cases actively hostile minorities. The Fabian Society's position was thus more typical of the membership than that of the Independent Labour party. On the other hand, the antagonistic minorities within the Committee's membership were at least to some extent compensated for by friendly groups within organizations not affiliated with it.

The assistance given by the L. R. C. to Tom Richards, a miners' candidate who successfully contested a seat in West Monmouth in 1904, indicated that the various organizations which were promoting working-class candidatures were progressing in the direction of cooperation. The Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress still endorsed trade union candidates, and the Management Committee of the General Federation of Trade Unions was prone to issue frequent pronouncements on current affairs, both national and
international." In 1905 a conference was arranged between these two bodies and the Executive Committee of the L. R. C. in an effort to reach an agreement regarding labour candidates in the approaching election. The conference was successful. L. R. C. candidates were promised "the loyal and hearty support of all sections of the Labour Party"—the latter term being apparently considered as synonymous with trade union movement. In return, candidates approved by the Parliamentary Committee were to receive L. R. C. support "so far as its constitution allows", and, further, the L. R. C. was to "make it clear that their national constitution does not require abstention on the part of the electors in constituencies where no Labour candidate is running." Later conferences between the three bodies resulted in the setting up of a National Joint Board which continued the work of co-ordination the original conference had commenced.

This agreement was only a small part of the careful preparations made by the Labour Representation Committee for the general election. The I. L. P.'s failure in 1895 "had turned the energies of the Labour leaders into steady organising work"—the task which, after the creation of the L. R. C., fell into the capable hands of Ramsay MacDonald. It is true that "The Taff Vale case came at exactly the right moment to fuse that work into a vital whole, to concentrate it upon a clear purpose." But it was the skill and organizing genius

33 Ibid. The four clauses of the concordat are given in full.
35 Ibid.
of MacDonald which made out of the rapidly growing and unwieldly structure entrusted to his care a well-knit and increasingly effective political organization. A new party can only make a showing at the polls when it has made an impression upon the electorate, and the voters who made possible Labour victories in 1906 had been to a great extent recruited by the I. L. P. and transformed into an orderly army by MacDonald. Furthermore, the L. R. C. had followed in the I. L. P.'s footsteps and had actively participated in municipal politics. Its success had been such that Philip Snowden, writing soon after the election, declared that its victory in the parliamentary field "would have given no surprise to anyone who had followed the local government elections during recent years."36

At least two articles which appeared in prominent journals on the eve of the election should have warned the public of what was about to happen. Will Crooks discussed the approaching contest in the December 1905 issue of the "National Review." He declared that many were convinced a Labour party would emerge from it, and that "the only difference of opinion is in the number of Labour men who are to be returned at the polls." Estimates soared as high as 150, but Crooks's personal suggestion was "between thirty and forty".37 He expected to see in the new House "a small compact Party, whose real power will be found in complete independence and increasing influence

36 Philip Snowden, "The New Power in Politics", Living Age, 249 (1906), 780. (An article reprinted from the Twentieth Century Review.)
throughout the country. Its ultimate success or failure, he
continued, "rests upon the unity of its members, the wisdom of
its procedure, and, above all, its ability to prove to the
nation that a workman's training in the battle of life is
quite as good a legislative asset as the culture of a university.

Keir Hardie contributed an article of equal interest to the
January issue of the "Nineteenth Century". "A Labour Party is
the logical and inevitable outcome of a popular suffrage," he
wrote, and, no doubt with the Taff Vale issue in mind, declared
that "the object of such a party cannot be any particular
reform with the accomplishment of which the motive for the
party would disappear. It is an outward and visible sign of
the determination of the disinherited democracy to have
government of the people by the people for the people." Then
followed an outline history of labour representation; an
account of the L. R. C., and an indication of the preparations
being made for the election, which should have convinced
Hardie's readers of the seriousness of the working-class entry
into politics.

But the election results nevertheless came like the
proverbial bolt from the blue. Labour's success created a wave
of startled interest and apprehension which swept over the
possessing classes throughout the country. The fifty candidates
of the L. R. C. had not only polled over 323,000 votes...nearly
6500 each...but had captured no less than twenty-nine seats.

38 Will Crooks, "The Prospects and Programme of the Labour
39 J. Keir Hardie, "Labour at the Forthcoming Election",
Nineteenth Century, 53 (1903), 12.
Will Crooks's "small compact party" had materialized. Guided and encouraged by the indefatigable Socialists the Labour movement had at last succeeded in creating an independent party, broad-based upon the trade unions and the co-operative societies.

The election, which occurred in January, was followed in February by the sixth annual conference of the Labour Representation Committee. The occasion was naturally marked by much rejoicing, the climax being a monster demonstration in the Queen's Hall. But it was at its regular sessions—which were held in the same Memorial Hall in which it had been organized—that the L. R. C. took the two steps which completed the work of the election. First, it declared that it had advanced far beyond the status of a committee, and accordingly renamed itself the Labour party. And, secondly, it revised its constitution in accordance with this broader conception of its character.

The new constitution need not be outlined in detail, but two points should be noticed. It described the Labour party as "a Federation consisting of Trade-Unions, Trades-Councils, Socialist Societies and Local Labour Associations," with the added provision that Co-operative Societies were also eligible for affiliation. Ramsay MacDonald's carefully constructed

40 The name "Labour party" was used at least as early as 1888, and was unofficially applied both to the I. L. P. and the L. R. C. (Cf. the titles of the various articles listed in the bibliography.) The change of name by the L. R. C. was proposed in 1905 but postponed until after the election in case the change might handicap candidates.

organization was thus preserved, and it has remained the foundation of the party ever since. The Local Associations were a new feature designed to broaden the party's basis, for they might consist partly of individual members, as well as of trade unions and socialist branches.42 Secondly, the new party's object was stated as follows:

"I. To organize and maintain a Parliamentary Labour Party, with its own whips and policy.

"2. To secure the election of candidates for whose candidatures an affiliated society has made itself financially responsible, and who have been selected by a regularly convened conference in the constituency."

Except for these changes the new organization closely resembled the L. R. C. The political levy, which was retained, was left at the sum of one penny per member per year.

The Parliamentary Labour party provided for in this constitution, and which was to consist of the Labour party's members of Parliament, was duly formed. Beyond the fact that its members were required to accept the national party's constitution, it was left free to elect its own officers, organize its activities in the House, and, in general, to regulate its own affairs. Only three of the Labour members—Hardie, Henderson and Crooks—had had any previous experience in Parliament; but the group included J. R. Clynes, F. W. Jowett, Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden and Stephen Walsh—all, along with Henderson, destined to be members of the first Labour government43—and such well known figures as G. N. Barnes, Will

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42 MacDonald, A Policy for the Labour Party, 27. Direct individual membership was not provided until 1918.
43 Keir Hardie died in 1915.
Crooks, John Hodge and Will Thorne. Keir Hardie was chosen first chairman of the Parliamentary party, whips and other officials were elected, a room was secured for its use at the House, a clerical staff engaged, and the Labour party, a reality at last, settled down to the business of its first session.

The existence of a general agreement between the Liberal and Labour parties at the time of the election has given rise to the assertion that Labour's success in 1906 was only a part of the greater Liberal victory. The fact that only five of the twenty-nine successful L. R. C. candidates were opposed by Liberals is taken as evidence that Liberal assistance was responsible for Labour's success in contesting many of the other twenty-four seats. But this co-operation was not due so much to Liberal friendship as to the realization that Labour had become a power to be reckoned with, and one to which concessions were necessarily made. Even within the Liberal party Labour had made great advances. Its strength at various times "may be gauged", as Beer says, "by the treatment which prominent trade unionists and socialists received at various times at the hands of Liberal Governments." Broadhurst had been made an Under-Secretary of State in 1886, and Thomas Burt a Parliamentary Secretary in 1892. But when Campbell-Bannerman undertook the formation of a ministry in December 1905 Labour's increased importance became evident. "It was assumed at once," Gretton records, "that Labour would have a representative in the Cabinet," and, as he points out, "Nothing could have shown

44 Beer, History of British Socialism, II, 197.
more clearly the great advance which Labour politics had made."  

The agreement between the parties in no way compromised Labour's freedom and independence of action. "The Conservative Government was the common objective of both, but as regards policy there was no compact or bargain," writes J. H. Spender in his biography of Campbell-Bannerman. "The understanding was limited to an agreement for mutual assistance. Three-cornered fights were to be avoided whenever possible. When, for local reasons, Liberals and Labour insisted on running opposing candidates, such contests were to be accepted as inevitable, and to be fought without bitterness and without impairing the general sense of co-operation. In concert with local leaders in the constituencies, relative claims to candidatures were considered in detail and settled. The understanding was honourably observed by both parties, and there was no trouble from first to last."  

It was a frank alliance against the Conservatives and particularly against the attack upon Free Trade which Chamberlain had initiated in May 1903. The Liberals had no anticipation that their victory would be as certain and complete as it proved to be. The very completeness of their success tended to minimize Labour's importance, and to conceal the fact that its advance was securely founded upon a genuinely increased allegiance to the principle of labour representation.

In spite of the agreement, the Liberals were alarmed by the advent of the Labour party, and their uneasiness increased

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when one of the twenty-two trade unionists, who had been elected in addition to the successful L. R. C. candidates, announced his adherence to the new party, and thereby raised its strength to thirty. They had no desire to see Labour absorb the remainder of the group. At the moment they possessed a clear majority, but unless steps were taken Labour might conceivably hold the balance after a future election. A letter was therefore sent to each of the trade union members--excluding those pledged to the new Labour party--in which it was proposed "that a separate organisation should be formed to represent the views of the Liberal-Labour members of Parliament and to secure a substantial increase in their numbers at the next General Election." This disinterestedly worded introduction was followed by the heart of the matter. "It is thought", the letter continued, "that a Labour Party within the Liberal Party will be a source of great strength to both, and I am requested to ask your views thereon as a Labour M. P." Though considerable financial assistance was promised, the plan to form a National Liberal-Labour League progressed no further. Instead, the members themselves formed a Trade Union group and came to a working agreement with the Labour party, which included an arrangement by which neither group would oppose the candidates of the other in subsequent elections.

The day of the Liberal-Labour member and the Liberal leading strings the status implied was thus definitely waning. The advocates of independent labour representation had not only

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47 The new Parliament consisted of 397 Liberals, 83 Nationalists, 157 Unionists, and, in all, 51 Labour members.
48 The Book of the Labour Party, I, 142. The letter is given in full. It was signed by Mr. Bankes, Liberal agent for Westminster.
created a party of their own, but were on increasingly intimate terms with the labour members of the old school. The majority of the trade union group were miners, and consequently joined the Labour party when the Miners' Federation became affiliated with it. This desertion to the enemy was fatal, and with the election of 1910 Liberal-Labourism for practical purposes ceased to exist.

Two aspects of the Labour party's advent remain to be considered. First, any student of its early history cannot but be impressed by the extraordinarily little attention which need not be bestowed upon the study of programmes. The reason is both simple and significant. The Labour party did not recruit its supporters to champion any particular measure or measures, though the emphasis which circumstances placed upon the Taff Vale decision deceived many into thinking so. A writer in the "Nineteenth Century", for example, declared that its success in 1906 was "due to two main causes of a purely transient character"--the unpopularity of the Tories, and the need for a new Trade Union act. He contended further that there was "no scope or adequate occupation for a Labour party in English politics." As proof of this he pointed to its lack of a definite programme, and as evidence of this weakness quoted a statement by Ramsay MacDonald which in reality revealed its source of strength. "The party has hitherto refused to compile

49 The Federation joined in 1908 as from the next general election, which proved to be in 1910.
50 L. A. Atherley-Jones, "The Story of the Labour Party", Nineteenth Century, 60 (1906), 583. In the same year an anonymous article in the Edinburgh Review, entitled "Socialism in the House of Commons" (Cf. 104(1906), 274) declared the party's appearance "must not be looked upon as a portent but as an accident."
51 Atherley-Jones, op. cit., 584.
a programme," MacDonald wrote, "for the very sufficient reason that a party is not created upon a programme, but upon a point of view. Not pledges but standpoints gain the confidence of the people." The Labour party was to a considerable extent created by broken promises. Its advent was evidence of a widespread loss of faith in the viewpoint of the older parties—of a firm conviction that neither of them had any serious intention of attacking the question of social reform. It was the concrete expression of the workers' opinion that something must be done, and of the Socialists' opinion that something could be done, in that direction. A new Trade Union act was merely the most obvious need of the moment—the first of innumerable steps by which the nation would progress towards a new social order. No single statement of its aims could do more, therefore, than indicate the immediate programme of the Labour party. Furthermore, such a statement of aims could not make clear its new point of view. Just as the similarity of the objectives of the I. L. P. and the S. D. F. when expressed on paper concealed the fundamental differences between them, so a comparison of Radical and Labour programmes could not reveal that the one consisted very largely of what candidates considered it essential to promise to do, and the other of reforms which Labour was determined to secure.

Mention of the Socialists suggests the second point—the extent to which Labour's success in 1906 was also a victory for

Socialism. Beyond any doubt the Socialists had done most to create the new organization. It was they who had conceived the idea of an independent working-class party, and had undertaken its actual formation as early as 1893. Keir Hardie and a handful of fellow Socialists had kept the idea alive during the 'nineties, and had made the I. L. P. into an energetic propagandist society which slowly but surely interested the younger and more progressive trade union leaders in a workers' party. It was the I. L. P. which drew up the resolution which, by passing the Trades Union Congress, made a party based upon the unions possible, and it was the socialist majority on the committee appointed to deal with the Congress's resolution which determined the character of the L. R. C. Further, it was the patience, tact and organizing skill of Ramsay MacDonald that made the Committee an effective political party, and the election and new name and constitution of 1906 were but the completion of a task accomplished primarily by the Socialists during the preceding years.

But in spite of their prominence the Socialists realized they were only an active minority, and that the vast majority of the L. R. C.'s million affiliated members had not become converts to Socialism—at least not consciously so. At the L. R. C.'s first annual conference a resolution had been moved which declared the Committee's ultimate object to be "an Industrial Commonwealth founded upon the common ownership of land and capital." No vote was taken on this occasion, but

53 The S. D. F. was intended to be a workers' party, but as it was not a genuine ancestor of the Labour party it is not included here.

54 Ths Book of the Labour Party, I, 167. The Object of the I.L.P. was stated in its constitution as being "An industrial commonwealth founded upon the Socialization of land and capital."
similar resolutions were defeated in 1903 and 1904. In 1905 the annual conference surprised the Socialists by passing the resolution unanimously and without discussion. There had been no wholesale conversion of the membership, however, and if a genuine socialist majority existed it was only among the leaders at the conference and not amongst the rank and file. The resolution "remained for the next ten years largely a pious expression of opinion," and the Socialists very wisely did not press their advantage. But the Labour party's emergence in 1906 was the reward of socialist effort and encouragement, and was a victory by an organization which was being slowly educated to a belief in Socialism, and which was to formally confess its faith in socialist aims and ideals in 1918.

Even in its infancy it was recognized that the new party would grow up socialist. As one writer expressed it at the time, it was obvious that "practically all the breath and brains of the thing" were socialistic; and, though the I.L.P. may contend that the Fabians continued to speculate and to study when popular propaganda had become the vital need, the conception of Socialism it taught the Labour party was that developed by the Fabian Society—a Socialism which was practical and constitutional, yet promised an effective solution of the social problem. Though the formal conversion of the party dates only from 1918, it has always been essentially socialist in attitude. From its inception it put the interests of the multitude first,

and worked for the development of a new social order which promised more for the millions, if less for the millionaires. That is the new viewpoint to which Ramsay MacDonald referred—the viewpoint which could secure no footing within the older parties; and it is this aspect of the Labour party which makes its advent the supremely important event in British political history during the last half century.
APPENDIX

A

Membership in the Labour Representation Committee and the Labour Party.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Trade Unions</th>
<th>Socialist Societies</th>
<th>Total Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-01</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>353,070</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-02</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>455,450</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-03</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>847,315</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-04</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>956,025</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-05</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>855,270</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-06</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>904,496</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-07</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>975,182</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B

Independent Labour Vote in Elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
<th>Labour Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>25#</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>62,698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>323,195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#Candidates of the I. L. P. only.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

NOTE

The following bibliography may suggest to some that the preceding study has been based too exclusively upon books which are to a greater or less extent in sympathy with the socialist and labour movements.

This is not because books written from other points of view have not been consulted, but is due to the fact that the material they furnish for such a study is extremely scanty. The standard histories devote very little space to Labour's advent, and the extent to which the new party's development is absolutely ignored in the biographies and memoirs of the leaders of the 1880-1906 period suggests that they had no inkling of its importance at the time.

Lord Morley refers once or twice to Labour and to Keir Hardie in his Reminiscences (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1917), and Spender indicates the general nature of the Liberal-Labour agreement in 1906 in his biography of Campbell-Bannerman, but that is practically the total harvest the standard works yield.

Many articles in the periodicals of the period have helped to make good this deficiency, and those which proved most helpful are listed below.

No attempt has been made to list the innumerable books which devote a few paragraphs or pages to the Labour party.
Part I: Books.


A rather characterless work, mostly devoted to socialist theory, with a few notes on various organizations. Strongly opposed to both socialist policy and aims.


Cf. II, Part IV, "Modern Socialism." Friendly to Marx, and sympathetic to Socialism, but perhaps the most valuable single work for the present purpose.


A useful, though sympathetic, summary of Marx's life and doctrines.

BERNSTEIN, Eduard, My Years in Exile. Translated by Bernard Miall. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1921.

Interesting because it gives many personal details regarding the socialist leaders, including the English socialists Bernstein met while in London.


The first of these books is really a revision of the second. Simple, clear expositions of Socialism in dialogue form.

The first hundred pages give an excellent account of the general historical background of the whole labour movement.


Clayton was active in the labour movement for many years, but considers that Socialism has been so modified as to be no longer worthy of the name. A valuable source if used carefully.


The Syllabus is an outline of the history, which is an invaluable guide for the present purpose. Cole's dates are not always reliable, however.


A source book, with many constitutions, programmes, etc., in full. Very helpful. The introduction is good.

FABIAN SOCIETY, Fabian Tracts. Two collections were used:


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Much the best guide to current opinion during the period, especially when used together with the files of periodicals for the period. The space devoted to Labour is unfortunately comparatively small.

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London: Fabian Society, 1892.

Unfortunately this outline is mostly devoted to the theological instead of the social basis of Christian Socialism.

HAMILTON, Mary Agnes, J. Ramsay MacDonald.  
(Incorporates The Man of To-morrow, published in 1923 as by "Iconoclast") 
London: Jonathan Cape, 1929.

Too popular to be of much use for the present purpose, but an interesting character study nevertheless.

HENDERSON, Archibald, George Bernard Shaw.  
His Life and Works. 
London: Hurst and Blackett Limited, 1911.

Chapters IV, V and VI give many interesting and important details regarding the history of the Fabian Society and the early socialist movement as a whole.

HOBHOUSE, L. T., Liberalism. 
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Disappointing.

London: James Nisbet and Company, 1898.

Very good, especially chapters III, IV, VII and VIII.

HUGUE, Richard W. (Editor), British Labour Speaks. 
New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924.

A collection of short addresses by contemporary Labour figures, some of which were useful.

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A brief but suggestive and useful book.

The last chapter ("The Future") is helpful for the present study.

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Boston & Chicago: Sibley and Company, 1890.

Very useful indeed.

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A Manifesto by the Fabian Society.
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The two short sections on the English movement are both good.


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"Mr. Chamberlain's Programme".
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Fabian Society, The.

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Fortnightly Review, 60 (1893), 569 et seq.
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M. (B. M.)

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Fortnightly Review, 23 (1875), 382-391.
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McLaren, John.

"Labour Parties: The New Element in Parliamentary Life".
Fortnightly Review, 85 (1906), 368-375.
A defence of Labour and Socialism in answer to an article by Herbert Vivian (q.v.).

Mahon, J. L.

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National Review, 23 (1894), 637-649.
A valuable review of labour politics from the socialist revival until 1894.
Mallock, W. H.

Mallock's articles are too numerous and hardly of sufficient importance to be listed separately, but his position as the leading non-socialist critic of social plans and policies should be noted.

An interesting example of his work is "The Political Powers of Labour: Their Extent and their Limitations" (Nineteenth Century, 60 (1906), 202-214) in which he discusses the Labour victory of 1906, and seeks to belittle its influence and importance. Cf. also "Property and Progress", listed in Part I.

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A discussion of the perils and possible profits of labour's entry into politics.

Masterman, C. F. G.

"Liberalism and Labour".
Nineteenth Century, 60 (1906), 706-718.
The most interesting part of the article is that which makes clear the contrast between the Liberal-Labour and the Labour members in the House.

Massingham, H. W.

"The Government and Labour".
Contemporary Review, 64 (1893), 765-776.
A defence of the Liberal government in reply to the attack of the "Fabian wreckers" in "To your tents, oh Israel!" (Cf. "Fabian Society"). Massingham, it will be remembered, resigned from the Fabian Society after the publication of the article.

Mill, John Stuart.

"Chapters on Socialism".
373-382.
513-530.
An important source for the history of Socialism in England.
Morgan-Brown, H.

"The Labour Party".
Fortnightly Review, 86 (1906), 916-924.
A favorable, optimistic but penetrating account of the Labour party's position and character.

Oldham, Alice.

"The History of Socialism".
III. German Socialism.
National Review, 16 (1890-91), 621-649.
The references to England are brief but interesting.

Osgood, H. L.

"Fabian Essays".
Political Science Quarterly, 5 (1890), 176-178.
An uninteresting review by an unimpressed critic.

Plumptre, E. H. (Dean).

"Christianity and Socialism".
Contemporary Review, 56 (1889), 734-751.
An important article in the history of Christian Socialism, in which a Dean of Wells declares the Christian attitude to Socialism "should be one of intelligent and watchful sympathy".

Potter, Beatrice.

"The Dock Life of East London".
Nineteenth Century, 22 (1887), 483-499.

"East London Labour".
Nineteenth Century, 24 (1888), 161-183.

"The Lords and the Sweating System".
Nineteenth Century, 27 (1890), 885-905.
Three excellent articles, which revealed the character of East End life in London. The two which appeared before the dock strike are historically most interesting.

Rae, John.

"The Socialism of Karl Marx and the Young Hegelians".
Contemporary Review, 40 (1881), 585-607.
An interesting and good early account of Marx's life and opinions.
Scanlon, Thomas.

"'Merrie England': Mr. Blatchford's Socialism".
A destructive attack on Blatchford by a writer who considers his arguments absurd.

Schloss, David F.

"The Labour Problem".
Fortnightly Review, 46 (1889), 437-447.
An interesting survey made immediately after the dock strike.

"The Sweating System".
Fortnightly Review, 47 (1890), 532-551.
An exposure of the rottenness of the sub-contracting system.

Seton-Karr, Henry.

"The Labour Party--a Unionist View."
Nineteenth Century, 59 (1906), 471-482.
A criticism by a Unionist candidate who admits having been "handsomely defeated" by a Labour rival.

Skelton, Noel.

"The Labour Party".
Quarterly Review, 248 (1927), 403-418.
A thought-provoking article by a critic who believes the Labour party is MacDonald's creation, and that it will collapse when his guiding hand is finally removed.

Snowden, Philip.

"The New Power in Politics".
Living Age, 249 (1906), 778-783.
(Reprinted from the "Twentieth Century Quarterly")
An article which reviews the history of Labour, and incidentally criticises the Fabian Society.

Smith, Goldwin.

"The Labour Movement".
Interesting because Smith advises the workers to steer clear of politics.
Taylor, Benjamin.

"Labourism in Parliament".
Fortnightly Review, 85 (1906), 1115-1130.
Unfriendly to Labour, but penetrating.

Threlfall, T. R.

"The New Departure in Trades-Unionism".
Nineteenth Century, 28 (1890), 517-525.
An account of Socialism and politics at the 1890 Trades Union Congress.

"The Political Future of 'Labour'".
Nineteenth Century, 35 (1894), 203-216.
An account of Labour in politics, opposed to the I. L. P. Threlfall was at this time secretary of the Labour Electoral Association.

Vivian, Herbert.

"Pretended Labour Parties".
Fortnightly Review, 85 (1906), 151-162.
An anti-socialist account of Labour politics of the preceding few years, which makes light of the L. R. C. This article was answered by John McLaren (q.v.).


Webb, Sidney.

"The Moral of the Elections".
Contemporary Review, 62 (1892), 272-287.
A Fabian commentary on the general election of 1892.

"Labor's Rise to Power in Great Britain".
Current History, 18 (1923), 552-560.
A brief historical account.

Wicks, Frederick.

"The Insignificance of the Trades Union Vote".
Nineteenth Century, 35 (1894), 602-617.
An attempt to belittle the influence of Labour in politics, which states that "the average percentage of Trades Unionists among the voters is 4 per cent., except in districts where they concentrate...".
Woods, Sam.

"Mr. Chamberlain's Programme".
Nineteenth Century, 32 (1892), 891-898.
Criticises the programme severely. Cf. Chamberlain's own article.